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**ETHNICITY IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW WITH  
ITS APPLICATION TO ETHNIC ISSUES IN BURMA**

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Divinity  
University of Glasgow  
in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Date:

## ***ABSTRACT***

This thesis critically investigates the relationship between the Jewish majority and the Gentile minority in the church which gave rise to Matthew's Gospel. That is, the investigation is one of ethnic divisions in one specific church. The central interest in this research is to examine the community life of Matthew's church in order to discover whether there was any racial discrimination, tension, and conflict between the two ethnic groups which was exacerbated by quite different cultural backgrounds. In order to examine social division, it was necessary to study the background of the author and his community in relation to ethnicity, the requirements for entry into the Matthean community, their new group identity markers, and to analyse the community rules and leadership of Matthew. The research is done principally from a study of the text of Matthew's Gospel and viewed from an ethnic perspective in evaluating any element relating to ethnicity.

As the result of this research project, this thesis argues that Matthew accepted non-Jews also into his Christian-Jewish community regardless of ethnic origins and formed a new kinsfolk of God, but his community rules did not provide any room to accommodate the culture of the Gentile minority. This cultural intolerance caused division, tension, conflict, and finally church schism in the aftermath of the Matthean leadership. It is therefore, advisable for the present and future leadership in both Christian mission and in political administration to learn from Matthew's failure to understand the power of culture and his lack of concern for the minority's interest. The final argument of this thesis is to choose the alternatives of giving equal rights and privileges to both minorities and majorities, or granting devolution; whichever is preferred, all our aim should be to heal our wounded world and keep the Church catholic healthy and alive to her mission.



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## ***PREFACE***

This research is done, first of all, in quest of answers to a crying question: why many minority ethnic groups are under the pressure of the more powerful and dominant majority groups in political affairs, in religious administrations, even within the Christian Catholic Church in some parts of the world; yet liberation movements from oppression are often interpreted and seen as rebellious. Could we find any solution to such ethnic problems for the world today? Secondly, it is diligently intended to contribute some substantial knowledge to the academia in biblical studies, especially in Matthean scholarship undertaken from a sociological approach.

It begins by describing the factors that motivated the author to do this particular area of research, then discusses the definition of the term 'ethnic' and current major issues in anthropological studies. Then in chapter two it deals about 'ethnicity in Diaspora Judaism at the turn of the Christian era' as to reflect the background of the Matthean community in the Graeco-Roman world in the first century CE. Chapter three discusses the context of the Gospel of Matthew: dating and locating the Gospel and investigating the author's background in relation to his ethnic identity. Subsequently chapter four investigates ethnicity in the Matthean community and argues that a majority of its members had come from a Jewish background and formed a Christian-Jewish community as a sect; nevertheless, they

had separated sociologically from the main Jewish community. Then Chapter five critically examines the community rules and the Matthean leadership. It argues that the Matthean community retained most of their Jewish culture which they inherited from Judaism. The community accepted Gentile converts but was not able to accommodate Gentile cultural life style; it further argues that there was ethnic or racial discrimination in the worldview of the Matthean community towards the outside world and even within the Matthean church there seems to have been ethnic distinctions. In chapter six, the rules and the life of Matthean community are consequently analysed and criticised that there was ethnic discrimination, cultural imperialism in the rules and leadership of Matthew's community which caused church split in its later generation. Thus this thesis challenges that men and women, leaders of today should learn from the failures of the early church leadership, i.e. from the Matthean community life and leadership which is argued in this work. The alternative for leaders in mixed cultures is either to listen and give equal treatment to each minority group or to allow each ethnic or cultural group to form their independent church, federal state, federal territory etc.

In the final chapter of our work we draw applications which we learned from this research to ethnic problems in Burma with the hope that our contribution may bring the unrest of fifty years ethnic armed conflicts caused by ethnic issues to its end, then we may practically enjoy *shalom* in the land and elsewhere in our global world.

## *ABBREVIATIONS*

In this thesis primary sources are either unabbreviated or follow standard abbreviations as shown here.

### Josephus,

<i>Ant</i>	<i>Antiquitates Iudaicae</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Bellum Iudaicum</i>
<i>C Ap</i>	<i>Contra Apionem</i>
<i>J.W.</i>	<i>Jewish War</i>

### Philo,

<i>Abr</i>	<i>De Abrahamo</i>
<i>Conf</i>	<i>De Confusione Linguarum</i>
<i>Flacc</i>	<i>In Flaccum</i>
<i>Legatio</i>	<i>De Legatione ad Gaium</i>
<i>Migr Abr</i>	<i>De Migratione Abrahami</i>
<i>Mos</i>	<i>De Vita Mosis</i>
<i>Praem</i>	<i>De Praemiis et Poenis</i>
<i>Quaest Gen</i>	<i>Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin</i>
<i>Somn</i>	<i>De Somniis</i>
<i>Spec Leg</i>	<i>De Specialibus Legibus</i>
<i>Virt</i>	<i>De Virtutibus</i>

### Rabbinic Materials:

Rabbinic materials are abbreviated as follow, or unabbreviated.

<i>m.</i>	<i>Mishnah</i>
<i>t.</i>	<i>Tosefta</i>
<i>b.</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
<i>y.</i>	<i>Jerusalem Talmud</i>

Other Abbreviations:

<i>AB</i>	<i>Anchor Bible</i>
<i>ABD</i>	<i>D. N. Freeman, ed., Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972-
<i>An Bib</i>	<i>Analecta Biblica</i>
<i>ASNU</i>	<i>Acta seminarii neotestamentici upsaliensis</i>
<i>ATR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
<i>BevT</i>	<i>Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica (Rome)</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>CBNTS</i>	<i>Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>HTKNT</i>	<i>Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>ICC</i>	<i>International Critical Commentary</i>
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>JBC</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNTSS</i>	<i>JSNT Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSOT Press</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>KNU</i>	<i>Karen National Union</i>
<i>NGS</i>	<i>New Gospel Studies</i>
<i>Nov T</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTOA</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Riv B</i>	<i>Rivista biblica</i>
<i>SBEC</i>	<i>Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity</i>
<i>SBS</i>	<i>Stuttgarter Bibelstudien</i>
<i>SNTSMS</i>	<i>Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series</i>
<i>TU</i>	<i>Texte und Untersuchungen</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TWNT</i>	<i>G. Kittel, G. Friedrich, eds. Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament. 9 vols. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933-1973.</i>



<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>WUNT</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>ZBC</i>	<i>Zomi Baptist Convention</i>
<i>ZBCM</i>	<i>Zomi Baptist Convention of Myanmar</i>
<i>ZORO</i>	<i>Zo Re-unification Organization</i>

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the *Revised Standard Version*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1971).

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Finally, I am very glad to have researched on this particular subject of ethnicity which is a global issue today. I hope this research makes some valuable contribution to the academia, the Church Catholic, and to the world for the benefit of humanity for which, if at all, may God alone be glorified.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Motivation and Purpose

My work experience in my native land, Burma, makes me realize that the whole nation has been suppressed in every aspect of life by the rulers of the state.<sup>1</sup> More precisely, political, economic, and social problems have been dealt with by a culture of suppression which has worsened all of these factors. My sympathy for the nation's ruin both from grass-roots level and from an academic perspective stimulated me to do research on *Liberation Theology for Burma*. In addition to these facts, my empathy for the future of my own nation causes me to commit to graduate study, and to work for the liberation of my people from such incredible and unspeakable suppression. Having the intention to do research on Liberation Theology, I initially spent some time in reading Liberation theology in general. As the result I found out that Liberation theology can be classified into six categories as follows:

1. Liberation Theology for Political Freedom,
2. Liberation Theology for Socio-economic Freedom and Growth,

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<sup>1</sup> In 1989, after my graduation from Glasgow University I returned to my homeland, Burma, and worked for nine years (1989-98) in different posts in Baptist Church organizations. Alongside my church ministry, I also started the Sophia Mission Institute for educating youngsters for the future of the nation. In all of my work activities I faced many intolerable acts of oppression from the military regime. The opportunity to serve the people has been so limited with certain rules of restriction in reality. See also *NEWSWEEK*, April 1997, 26-28; The Jubilee Campaign Bulletin describes, 'What is happening in Burma today is every bit as evil as the atrocities committed by the Bosnia war lords,' see the Jubilee Campaign's *Briefing Paper on BURMA: Action for real change in Burma*; also *AMNESTY*, Issue 91, Sept/Oct, 4-7.

3. Liberation Theology for Females from Male gender-dominance,
4. Liberation Theology for Oppressed Ethnic Minority Groups,
5. Liberation Theology for Religious Freedom,
6. Liberation Theology for the Marginalized Social outcast  
class of people as in the Hindu caste system in India.

Different people may need different aspects of Liberation theology according to their respective situation and the infringements of liberty they themselves suffer. Burma needs five of the above Liberation theologies obviously, that is, from one to five in the above list. I believe that for Burma, if and when Liberation theology for political freedom is achieved practically and successfully the ways for *Socio-economic freedom and growth*, *Feminist liberation*, *Religious freedom* would be eventually opened up. But Burma's minority ethnic problem may remain the same or even more serious until this particular issue is resolved to the satisfaction of each ethnic group in the union-state.

Burma's independence from Britain in 1948 was immediately followed by a number of ethnic groups' insurgency.<sup>2</sup> More than fifty years of unrest has taken to toll of Burma, not just in the National Economy but also in the regions belonging to the ethnic minorities. Hundreds of thousands of innocent people have been killed, and indescribable social evils such as raping women by the Burmese soldiers, forced porters, torturing innocent citizens without trial, and many intolerant evils take place

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<sup>2</sup> The Karens, the Kachins, the Shans, the Was, the Arakanese and others almost every ethnic minority group took up arms and started fighting against the central government. The Zomis (Chins) started in 1964.

in people's daily life.<sup>3</sup> Life is never stable. Martin Smith has documented the problems of Burma's ethnicity and the ethnic insurgency in his book and comments that, 'The continuing wars in Burma have not only brought the national economy to the brink of bankruptcy, but have wrought devastation on many of the country's ethnic minority regions.'<sup>4</sup>

Smith gives his observation on Burma's ethnic issues briefly but articulately in the remark, 'It is as if a spell has been broken and the country has awakened from a time warp. A just solution to the ethnic minority cause has become a main priority.'<sup>5</sup> Smith's empirical investigation on Burma's political and economic link<sup>6</sup> and his conclusion that the ethnic problem in Burma is one of the main factors, or even the most serious factor, which has the outcome of national economic bankruptcy, and a way that leads to the collapse of the union-state. In other words, it could be said that until Burma takes this ethnic issue seriously as her national agenda and solves the problem successfully, other major problems such as economic growth and political welfare will never be achieved successfully. The primary purpose of this research project is to suggest ways forward from this impasse from biblical theological points of view.

How long this struggle for ethnic freedom will take cannot be measured at this stage. This is a crying question from the folks in the ethnic regions out of fear and

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<sup>3</sup> See 'Licence to kill in Burma,' : Terror Squads of Burma, in *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*, Issue 99, June 1999, 1-3; in relation to religious matters the annual report of the U. S. Department of State describes a good deal of religious intolerance, see *U.S. Department of State, Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999: Burma*, Released by the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Washington, DC, September 9, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the politics of ethnicity*, (London: Zed Books, 1991), 423.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, 1991, 424.

devastation. As far as back in 1958 a veteran Karen lawyer Saw Po Chit warned the leaders of the Karen National Union<sup>7</sup> at their meeting that, 'The ways things are going we will spend longer in wilderness than the lost tribes of Israel.'<sup>8</sup> This prediction had come true in 1988 completing the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their insurgency and the leaders of the KNU alarmingly began to talk of the 40 years of what they call the 'father to son war.'<sup>9</sup> This describes the intention of the ethnic leaders to continue violent escalation until they achieve their goal. Would there be any solution at all to overcome conflict between the government and ethnic insurgents?

This ethnic issue causes not only political turmoil and economic decline, but also disunity and split within and among Christian communities in Burma. The Lisu (one ethnic group) Baptists separated from the Kachin (one of another but close ethnic group) Baptist Convention. The Karen Baptist Convention divided into two groups: the Karen Baptist Convention (for the Sagaw Karens) and the Po Karen Baptist Conference; and the Zomis recently followed the pattern of the former two groups and became two conventions: Zomi Baptist Convention and Zomi Baptist Convention of Myanmar. Are these divisions in the same denomination the best way of solving ethnic tension, or could we find an alternative?

Division also hinders Christian mission. In Burma more than 90% of the Christian population is found among the ethnic minority groups particularly among the Karens, the Zomis (Chins), and the Kachins and each of these ethnic groups is involved in the ethnic insurgency movement. For the majority of Burmese, primarily

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<sup>6</sup> Smith analyses the economic crisis of Burma from a sociological political point of view and concludes that the ethnic problem in Burma is one of the main causes leading to the ruin of the national economy.

<sup>7</sup> Hereafter abbreviated as KNU.

Buddhists, there is an association formed between Christianity and political dissidents. This is to say that when a Christian approaches a Buddhist with the Christian Gospel, he or she is presumed to be a rebellious person and treated as a threat to national unity. To speak more clearly, because of the predominantly ethnic membership of the church, Christians are time and again identified as rebellious people. Could we find a way of solution to presenting true Christian identity to other faiths of religion in Burma? The questions we have raised are the factors that lead us to study ethnicity from a biblical perspective in order to discover some biblical principles relating to ethnic issues and to find ways to apply this theology to those particular problems.

Although the primary aim of this study is for the welfare of Burma, ethnicity has now become a global issue, that is to say, ethnic problem is experienced in many other parts of the world today. In the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century most of the wars in our global world were between nation states. Since then, in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of the armed conflicts are between ethnic groups or religious groups and occur within one and the same nation – state. For instance, according to the United Nations Report on the World Social Situation for 1993, in 1989-90 alone there were 33 armed conflicts which led to more than a thousand casualties. Out of these 33 armed conflicts only one was between nations and all others (32 of the armed conflicts) were between ethnic or religious groups within one and the same state.<sup>10</sup> Many parts of our contemporary world have painfully witnessed huge blood-

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, 1991, 423.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, 1991, 423.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Banton, *Ethnic and Racial Consciousness*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed. , (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Inc., 1997), 1.



shed through ethnic conflicts occurring in Bosnia, in the former Yugoslavia, and others. Africa saw terrible killings in both Rwanda and Burundi between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups<sup>11</sup>; and Asia witnessed many painful mass killings in many parts of the continent,<sup>12</sup> and many other parts of the world too suffered conflicts either by ethnic or religious groups in recent years<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, one of the most important and urgent global needs today is to pay close attention to ethnic issues and work out some means for reconciliation and peace. For Christians there is also the greater imperative of bringing in God's Kingdom. This crucial task of reconciliation and peace lies with scholars of biblical theology, social science, political science and of others for the benefit of humanity.

## 1.2 Definition of the term 'Ethnicity'

Scholars in different fields of academia have attempted to define the term 'ethnicity' from their own perspectives of academic discipline, and they come up with different conclusions. Anthony Smith<sup>14</sup> listed six features to define the term, that are:

(1) a collective name,

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<sup>11</sup> Hutu terrorism murdered at least 500 Tutsi, and they in turn reacted with larger killing of between 2500 and 5000 Hutu in 1965. This genocide was repeated in 1972 and about 100,000 people or 3.5 per cent of the population were massacred in the course of a few weeks; see Banton, 1997, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 75. In Nigeria in 1966 about 30,000 people were massacred; and also there was a war in the declared independent Biafra that caused the death of between 600, 000 and 1 million Easterners, see Banton, 1997, 81.

<sup>12</sup> In Indonesia in 1965 between 200, 000 and 1 million people were slaughtered; most of those were Chinese. The Khmer Rouge forces in Cambodia between 1974 and 1979 caused the loss of about 2 million lives; in Bangladesh, the former East Pakistan, the racial conflict between East and West resulted in the death of about 3 million Bangalis, see Banton, 1997, 79-82.

<sup>13</sup> The Nazi government of Germany was responsible for the slaughter of some 6 million Jews and about 250, 000 Gypsies on a racial basis during 1941-5, and the government of Turkey was responsible for the deaths of about 800, 000 Armenians in 1915, see Banton, 1997, 77; and the Middle East problem between racial ethnic groups is an unrest war.

- (2) a common myth of descent,
- (3) a shared history,
- (4) a distinctive shared culture,
- (5) an association with a specific territory,
- (6) and a sense of solidarity.

T. K. Oommen rightly argues that the sixth feature is a product of the first five features which intends to produce solidarity and therefore, the sixth feature is not a feature that defines the term.<sup>15</sup> Even although there are certain limits for practical association with a specific territory, nevertheless there is a close linkage between people in their homeland and the same people in a Diaspora land. The people in a Diaspora land have their concern for their homeland and by different ways and levels of attachment they all have their link to their homeland. For instance, though the Jews in Europe, America, and elsewhere are not able to be associated with a specific territory of Palestine, nevertheless they all seem to have a deep concern and attachment to their homeland.<sup>16</sup> Pakistanis who immigrated to Britain, and those who stayed in Pakistan (the assumption of a shared culture) are the same ethnic people, more than this surely by a common myth of descent and a collective name for their identity they bear the same label of identity. Although they are separated by seas and lands which divide them from a specific territory, nevertheless the

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<sup>14</sup> Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 22-31.

<sup>15</sup> T. K. Oommen, *Citizenship and National Identity: From Colonialism to Globalism*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), 19-20.

<sup>16</sup> This is a problematic issue over centuries that the Jews struggle for their specific territory. Although the state of Israel was formed in 1948, millions of the Jews who link to the Jews in Israel are still in foreign lands. Their aim may be to form a specific territory for all the Jews which is a work of political science and yet to be fulfilled. Even if the goal is not achieved practically, the aim itself is already an evidence of their attachment to the Land. Therefore, if we view from an ethnic perspective,

Pakistanis in Britain and elsewhere seem to have concern for their homeland and have some attachment to their home land in Asia.

If we analyse Smith's hypothesis, it seems that he looks at ethnicity from the perspective of political science and emphatically views the purpose of the ethnic group, and the group's intentions for their political purpose. From an anthropological perspective it can be said that Smith is an instrumentalist<sup>17</sup> who sees ethnicity as political goal-directed ethnicity. We cannot entirely agree with him because there are many ethnic groups which have no political purpose but are formed by nature and circumstances. However, the five features of Smith, that is from one to five in the list, are helpful as a grid which could be applied to many ethnic groups to define their identity and their boundaries.

There is a widely accepted definition of the term ethnic in anthropological literature initiated by R. Narroll which states that an ethnic group is a population which:

- (1) is largely biologically self-perpetuating,
  - (2) shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms,
  - (3) makes up a field of communication and interaction,
  - (4) has a membership which identifies, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.<sup>18</sup>
- Fredrik Barth comments that 'this ideal type definition is not far removed in content from the

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both the Jews who are in the Land and those who are scattered elsewhere in the Diaspora, they bear their Jewish ethnic identity by having an attachment to the Land anywhere they live.

<sup>17</sup> The terms 'instrumentality and primordiality' are defined in this work, see 14.

traditional proposition that a race culture = a language = and that a society = a unit which rejects or discriminates against others'.<sup>19</sup> Narroll's classification for defining the term seems to be acceptable largely when qualified by Barth's emphasis on race, culture, language, and society, and when linked with a unit of identification for the actors themselves and for others.

We can sum up and gather the preceding classifications for defining the term from anthropological literature by saying that, an ethnic group is one which has:

- (1) a shared biological race,
- (2) shared norms,
- (3) a shared language,
- (4) is a societal unit with a common or shared identity.

There are, however, certain difficulties with this kind of classification of an ethnic group. Firstly Michael Banton warns us that race is used in a negative sense supporting the desire of an insider to exclude others. In Banton's argument, race is used to demonstrate ethnic conflict that often leads to bloodshed. Consequently the terms race and racism are identified with extreme nationalism in the view of ordinary people and international from political affairs as referring to racial discrimination, prejudice, inequality and so on.<sup>20</sup> From my viewpoint race does not necessarily perforate its use; it could simply mean blood-tied genealogy or ancestry which anthropologists often call 'shared history'. It is, therefore a way of expressing an

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<sup>18</sup> R. Narroll, 'Ethnic Unit Classification', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 5, No. 4. The words in quotation are taken from Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, ed. Fredrik Barth, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 11-12.

<sup>19</sup> Barth, 1969, 11.

<sup>20</sup> According to Banton, the term 'race' is used in a negative in the UN documents and it refers to the many racial conflicts that the UN tries to eliminate. See Banton, 1997, 405.

ancestral-genealogical link. However, in order to avoid misinterpretation we will use the term blood-tied kinship in place of race as far as possible in this thesis.

Secondly, we face another difficulty with the use of language as one classification for ethnic boundary. Language can undoubtedly and obviously be used as a criterion to identify and mark boundaries for many contexts. For instance, most ethnic groups are easily identified by which factors themselves and others by the language or dialect they speak as their mother-tongue. But in Bosnia members of all three main ethnic groups, the Serbs, the Croats, and the Muslims speak the same language with only little variations.<sup>21</sup>

The third difficulty occurs when a religion becomes a mark of the identity of an ethnic group. Again in Bosnia the name 'Muslim' is used to distinguish a class of people who are neither Serbs nor Croats.<sup>22</sup> In reality, many of those who are identified as Muslims in Bosnia today, do not follow any orthodox practice of the Islamic religion, they adopt the term 'Muslim' as the name for their ethnic group, which is based upon the religion practised by their forbears. The term 'Muslim' is not used to classify any ethnic group in other parts of the world, but identifies a religion.

Despite the difficulties into which we inevitably fall, we have to draw some tentative conclusions so that we may define the terms and boundaries for ethnic groups, although we foresee the impossibility of giving an ideal definition for all fields of academia and for universal application to each context in the global world. Firstly, the *ancestral-genealogical link* seems to be most common and applicable.

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<sup>21</sup> Banton, 1997, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Banton, 1997, 3.

For the Jews and Germans ancestral linkage would be a hallmark of their ethnic identity and the first step for labelling a person's identity. We have proposed to use *blood-tied kinship* to mean ancestry-genealogical link that combines with kinship.

Secondly, *culture* is one important tool to classify a person's sociological membership of a group. Barth says 'culture is nothing but a way to describe human behaviour,'<sup>23</sup> therefore, any human living behaviour often expresses the person's origin in culture. As Barth sees that ethnic membership is at once a question of source of origin as well as of current identity;<sup>24</sup> the cultural behaviour of a person could distinguish his origin and identify, and his/her current membership group. For instance, many Jews in the Diaspora at the turn of the Christian era no longer spoke Hebrew but they kept their Jewish culture by which (as a criterion) they were classified as a Jewish ethnic group.<sup>25</sup>

Thirdly, *language* is also an important feature for many people in different parts of the world despite the fact that it does not apply to the case of Bosnia (already cited). This is not a sole feature for classifying people because in some places people may speak another language as their mother-tongue and that might be the only language he or she is able to speak due to specific political circumstance, etc.

Finally, as Barth describes, individuals and small groups may change their locality, their subsistence pattern, their political alliance and form, etc. because of specific economic and political reasons relating to their former position among the

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<sup>23</sup> Barth, 1969, 9.

<sup>24</sup> Barth, 1969, 29.

<sup>25</sup> This will be dealt in chapter two of this work; see also John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 404-13.

assimilating group.<sup>26</sup> In such circumstances people might be compelled to change their identity to that of the assimilating group so that their origins of blood-tied kinship, culture and language may be absorbed by the new group and their former identity might be diminished or even lost. In such circumstance, the ethnic identity of a certain group may change from one to another, an ethnic group or some individuals might be assimilated to another ethnic group for political, economic or other reasons. This flux of ethnic identity and emergence causes the fact that ethnicity does not always depend on blood-ties and kinship but social circumstance sometimes cause people to cross one ethnic boundary to another. In this regard instrumentalism sometimes causes change of ethnic identity.

### **1.3 Conclusion:**

It is clear that we cannot make an ideal model to define ethnicity nor a pattern for group boundary marking. The only suggestion we can give here is that the scholar has to be aware of all the features but apply only the applicable classifications to the particular field of work on which he or she is concentrating or working. For instance, John Barclay gives a definition of the Jewish ethnic identity in the world of the Mediterranean Diaspora as the combination of kinship and custom; reflecting both a shared genealogy and common behaviour, and not merely a question of cultural practice but a combination of these two interlocking factors.<sup>27</sup> This seems to be adequate for the Jewish communities in the Mediterranean time but it is

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<sup>26</sup> Barth, 1969, 24.

<sup>27</sup> Barclay, 1996, 404-13.

inadequate to apply to the Jews everywhere. Each scholar would have to use the appropriate factors for the specific work.

Another aspect one has to look at is the perspective of the academic discipline. An anthropologist may emphasise where people come from, while a sociologist may emphasise how this people live in the society, and a political scientist may view the ethnic group's political interests and goals, and how and why they might include others to achieve that goal. Then the biblical scholar has to combine the two outlooks of anthropologist and sociologist and try to draw an application for biblical hermeneutics and for his contemporary world.

For New Testament studies, particularly for this thesis on ethnicity in the Gospel of Matthew, assuming that the Matthean community is a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, (this will be dealt in succeeding chapters) we need to apply (1) a culturally based criteria as the focal point in identifying people's ethnic background. (2) Blood-tied kinship would also play an important role especially for the Jews. These two interlocking factors, then will be the main tools for our ethnographic investigation on the Gospel of Matthew. When we come to drawing applications for ethnic issues in Burma, the language factor,<sup>28</sup> sometimes territory, would need to be added to the above two main factors (i. e. culture and blood-tied kinship or ancestral – genealogical link) which we have proposed for New Testament study.

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<sup>28</sup> In Burma, particularly among the Zomi ethnic groups, language and genealogy are the hallmarks for ethnic boundary; this will be dealt in more detail in chapter 7, see 290-307.



## 1.4 Current Issues and Major Discussions on Ethnicity in Anthropological Study

### 1.4.1 *Two main theories in current anthropological study*

The two theories are primordiality and instrumentality. The primordiality theory holds that ethnicity is an innate aspect of human identity; it is essential and permanent. It has no particular purpose. It is the internal psychological sense of identity embraced by the actors themselves and is external socially given. In other words, it is the combination of both socio-centrally and egocentrically born identity. The instrumentality theory holds that ethnicity is an artefact motivated within and created by individuals or groups to unite a group of people together for some common purpose such as economic, political, or similar goal of good purpose. Since it is intentionally made for a purpose, its continued persistence depends on that purpose or goal.

### 1.4.2 *Primary and Secondary Ethnicity*

There is a confusion in applying the term ethnicity both to larger groups which are often identified with nations, or even larger than nations, usually majorities; and smaller groups or minority groups. In the United States of America hyphenated terms are used to describe some of the minority groups such as Italian-Americans, Polish-Americans, Irish-Americans and so on.<sup>29</sup> For Julian S. Huxley and A. C. Haddon, the term ethnic is a synonym for race and it refers to identifying groups as

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<sup>29</sup> Banton, 1997, 37.

in Europe, that is those living in their inhabited land<sup>30</sup>. Banton uses the terms 'primary and secondary ethnicity' in order to make a distinction between a people living in their own land or a land to which they have migrated<sup>31</sup> if I understand him correctly. This is to say that, for Banton, the Italians in Italy are the primary ethnic group and the Italians in the United States, which are identified with hyphenated terms as Italian-American, are the secondary ethnic group in the United States.

In my critical point of view these terms of primary and secondary ethnicity could lead to a misinterpretation in terms of value especially with the word 'secondary' that sounds a less important one. Therefore, I would like to argue that the term 'secondary ethnicity' should be substituted by '*Diaspora ethnicity*' because both of the people groups, one group in their inhabited land and one in their Diaspora are the same people. There is no less importance or less value in between these two groups of people. The primary difference is that, while one group is in their homeland the other is in other region or state as migrants. Those who have migrated to another region or stayed away from their land of origin should be called '*Diaspora ethnic*' group. This would mean that, for example, the Irish people in Ireland are primarily Irish ethnic and the Irish people in the United States are not a secondary Irish ethnic group as Banton states, but '*Diaspora Irish ethnic group*' in the United States. So by applying this substitute term some confusion might be cleared and possible psychological ill-feeling avoided. In this assessment the attachment to the land would play an important role. The degree of attachment would vary among the

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<sup>30</sup> Julian S. Huxley and A. C. Haddon, *We Europeans: A Survey of Racial Problems*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), 91-2.

<sup>31</sup> Banton, 1997, 37.

Diaspora ethnic communities, nevertheless there is in most, if not all, cases a common attachment to their homeland.

### 1.4.3 *Contemporary Major Schools of Thought on Ethnicity in Anthropological Study*

The importance and interest of ethnicity to social anthropology in recent decades was mostly developed in the 1970s by Fredrik Barth and his colleagues, the Manchester School of Anthropology and the Soviet *ethnos* theorists. Fredrik Barth and his colleagues, and the Manchester School of Anthropology tried to examine the social anthropological structure of minority migrants from distinct social cultural backgrounds, rural-urban migration, and the shift from 'tribe' to 'ethnic group'; while the Soviet *ethnos* theorists tried to examine the historical development of human society as it progresses from one stage to the other.

#### (a) The Scandinavian School of Thought

Fredrik Barth and his colleagues, the Scandinavian anthropologists, were concerned with the social organization of cultural differences, and they analysed Norway, North-east Africa, Mexico, Pakistan, and Laos from this perspective. This school of thought emphasised the boundaries of the groups for fear of giving a misleading impression of confirming notions of stability and making it internal if investigating the physical and ideological contents of the group in isolation. Barth tries to show that ethnic groups developed are socially constructed and have no ethnic stability. He seems to show that ethnic groups develop and are transformed as

they interact in their social world.<sup>32</sup> Barth uses the following features to investigate the boundaries of ethnic groups: (1) biological self-perpetuating, (2) bounded, (3) sharing fundamental cultural values, (4) forming a field of communication and interaction, (5) conscious of category identity which is recognized by others.<sup>33</sup> He contributes two important points: first, boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel and information across them; second, in contrast to the first, such ethnic groups cannot exist in isolation but only in contrast to other groups. Barth thinks of ethnicity as a super-ordinate which is close to primordialism,<sup>34</sup> holding the notion that ethnicity is a permanent and essential condition.<sup>35</sup>

#### (b) The Manchester School of Thought

In the post-war period there are two mainstream anthropological schools of thought in Britain, particularly with regard to African anthropology. One, the Oxford and Cambridge school of anthropologists, was concerned with the traditional social organization of African tribes. On the other hand, we have the Manchester School which was concerned with the changes brought about by urbanization and colonization, and with the building of the industrialized, urbanized nation states of post-colonial Africa.<sup>36</sup> The anthropologists of the Manchester School saw the presence of white colonists as a crucial factor to be included in any account of indigenous peoples. They were responsible for bringing about the terminological shift from 'tribe' to ethnic group; that is, the Manchester school of anthropology

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<sup>32</sup> Barth, 1969, 10-28.

<sup>33</sup> Barth, 1969, 10-11.

<sup>34</sup> The anthropological terms of primordialism and instrumentalism are explained, see this thesis 14.

largely introduced the term ethnic to replace tribe in the field of social science. Indeed, the themes of 'tribalism', 'detrribalization' and 'retribalization' were central to many of Manchester School monographs of that period.

Max Gluckman, head of that school of thought, makes the point with regard to social life in South Africa, that 'black' and 'white' are two categories which must not mix, like caste in India, or the categories of men and women in many communities.<sup>37</sup> Some anthropologists, following the ideas of Tönnies and Durkheim, saw a sharp difference in mentality between rural and urban dwellers. For them, tribalism infers a rural feature which made no sense in towns and other urban locales where a different set of rules for social organization and intercourse was needed.<sup>38</sup> J. Clyde Mitchell proves from his research that tribalism remains essentially a category of interaction in casual social intercourse.<sup>39</sup> In other words, he believes that tribal distance (which I would like to call ethnicity) still remains in the urban areas amongst migrants from the rural areas. On the other hand, Philip Mayer (as one of the Manchester School of scholars) is also closely linked with Barth in the opinion that ethnic identities do not naturally persist, but need to be maintained.<sup>40</sup>

Abner Cohen, one of the outstanding scholars of the Manchester School's middle period, believed that 'ethnicity is instrumental;...there are reasons for a group

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<sup>35</sup> I sum up the entire thesis of Barth in his work 'Introduction', 1969, cited above; but see especially, Barth, 1969, 17.

<sup>36</sup> Marcus Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 24-5.

<sup>37</sup> Max Gluckman, *Analysis of a social situation in modern Zululand*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), 12.

<sup>38</sup> The primary source for Tönnies and Durkheim is not available to me and this quotation is taken from Banks, see Banks, 1996, 29.

<sup>39</sup> J. Clyde Mitchell, *The Kalela dance: aspects of social relationships among urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), 42.

<sup>40</sup> Philip Mayer, *Townsmen or tribesmen: conservatism and the process of urbanization in a South African city*, (Capetown, Oxford University Press, 1971), ix.

asserting and maintaining an ethnic identity and these reasons are economic and political rather than psychological.’<sup>41</sup> This comment is based on his research work among the Hausa traders in the southern Nigerian city of Ibadan. Cohen’s significant contribution is to propose the notion of ‘political ethnicity’<sup>42</sup> that is, ethnicity not so much as a form of identity but as a strategy for corporate action. Examining Cohen’s thesis, Marcus Banks makes a clear statement: ‘political ethnicity is goal-directed ethnicity, formed by internal organization and stimulated by external pressures, and held not for its own sake but to defend an economic or political interest.’<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, A. L. Epstein proposed a pattern and says that two aspects of tribalism (we mostly now call ethnicity) have to be looked at: (1) social-centrally or objectively as a system of social categories, and (2) egocentrically or subjectively. By this, Epstein means that the actor himself or herself may have two viewpoints: an external socially given one and an internal (basically psychological) sense of identity. Epstein criticises Cohen, firstly, for not proving his instrumental theory to be universally applicable or at least more widely applicable; and secondly, because there are situations where ethnicity is active but does not seem to have any ‘aim’. In this criticism he is close to Barth when he claims that the content of a group’s identity persists both in times of economic or political ‘need’ and in times of relative stability.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Abner Cohen, *Customs and politics in urban Africa: A Study of Hausa migrants in Yoruba towns*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 14-15, 187-8.

<sup>42</sup> Banks, 1996, 32.

<sup>43</sup> Cohen, 1969, 14-5, 187-8.

(c) Soviet Ethnos Theory

Yulian Bromley was the best-known Soviet anthropologist. With his colleagues, Bromley developed a theory of ethnicity. The position of Bromley and his colleagues was that of a strong primordialism. They developed their theory from the macro-historical approach closely committed to a Marxist interpretation of history which holds the view that 'all human societies pass historically through five social formations: (a) primitive communism, (b) slave-ownership, (c) feudalism, (d) capitalism (e) and finally socialism leading to communism.'<sup>45</sup>

In contrast to the British anthropologists, the Soviet anthropologists saw social phenomena as always in a stage of change, containing elements of the past and presages of the future, while the British anthropologists see non - change and coherence. Bromley proposes his theory of ethnicity, a stable core of ethnicity - the *ethnos* or *ethnikos* - persists through all social formations even though affected by the prevailing economic and political environment of any formation. He defines the *ethnos* as 'a historically formed community of people characterised by common, relatively stable cultural features, certain distinctive psychological traits, and the consciousness of their unity as distinguished from other similar communities.'<sup>46</sup> Bromley introduced a new term: 'Ethnosocial organism' by which he means to describe the interaction of the *ethnos* with the historical stage or economic environment. However, he comes close to Barth when he says, 'the external factors are independent of the *ethnos* but effect it such that the salient characteristics by

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<sup>44</sup> A. L. Epstein, *Ethos and identity: three studies in ethnicity*, (London: Tavistock, 1978), 96-7.

<sup>45</sup> Yulian Bromley, 'The term *ethnos* and its definition', in Yulian Bromley (ed.) *Soviet ethnology and anthropology today*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), 61.

<sup>46</sup> Bromley, 1974, 66.

which the ethnos is recognised may change', <sup>47</sup> when Barth also has the view that the boundary of the ethnos is always there but the contents or distinctive characteristics change. Bromley contributes the mechanism of 'class' and 'race'. For him, ethnos and class are complementary. The study of class is a horizontal analysis and the study of ethnos is a vertical analysis. According to him, an ethno-social organism may be divided by class while the core of ethnos remains constant.<sup>48</sup> Race is the expression of phenotypical difference. He is somewhat simplistic in this regard.

#### 1.4. 4 *Analysis*

So far, two kinds of pattern and two extreme theories have been developed by scholars with regard to ethnicity. The Soviet ethnos theorists develop a pattern which sees social phenomena as always in a state of flux, containing the elements of the past and presages of the future, and ethnicity persists through all social formations.<sup>49</sup> The Western (mainly British) scholars develop a pattern which sees social phenomena as static and coherent. Bearing in mind that Soviet anthropologists were working in a Marxist socialist cultural environment, it is to be presumed that they were (at least to some extent) influenced by the Marxist interpretation of history which led them to see social phenomena in a state of change.

Bromley and his colleagues, the Soviet anthropologists, are strongly primordialists. The Manchester School is divided between the two theories. Abner

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<sup>47</sup> Banks, 1996, 19.

<sup>48</sup> Tamara Dragadza, 'The place of "ethnos" theory in Soviet anthropology', in *Soviet and Western anthropology*, Ernest Gellner ed., (London: Duckworth, 1980), 166.

<sup>49</sup> Banks, 1996, 18.



Cohen is strongly instrumentalist and proposes the notion 'political ethnicity'. On the other hand, A. L. Epstein and some others attack instrumentality. Barth takes no extreme position in either of the two parallel theories running side by side as he claims his thought, '...the content of a group's ethnic identity is fluid and shifting and yet the presence of an ethnic identity persists, one can assume that it will persist both in times of economic or political 'need' as well as in times of relative stability'.<sup>50</sup> In my overall assessment I see that Barth is closer to primordialism although not a pure primordialist.

Again, the Soviet anthropologists were under the control of a Marxist communist government (at least in their peak days of the 1970s). I grew up in a similar social background, under military dictators in Burma, where there is no freedom of thought nor expression of feeling. I would assume that developing the idea of instrumentalist - ethnicity, especially for a political purpose, in such a communist state would be interpreted as anti-government and strictly prohibited. They also seem to fail in synchronic analysis-based fieldwork data.<sup>51</sup> Abner Cohen did his empirical investigation among the Hausa traders in Nigeria. Those people were fighting for the survival of their economics and for protection from external pressure in economics and political power by the dominating people (already cited above), so it leads him to view ethnicity as instrumental for economic or political purposes and he proposes political ethnicity. Meanwhile, A. L. Epstein studies from the psychological point of view and comes out with the notion of 'cognitive maps' and rejects political

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<sup>50</sup> Banks, 1996, 37.

<sup>51</sup> This is to say that they needed to balance theory and field research for a balanced theory, see Banks, 1996, 18.

ethnicity. Clyde Mitchell analyses ethnicity basing his theory on the Kalela dance (1956). Epstein, Mitchell and some others hold the view of primordialism.

So in my analytical assessment, most of our thoughts and notions are controlled by the person's background, and perspective, and the kind of field in which he or she does the empirical study. I perceive that any definition is justifiable and both of the theories are applicable at times depending on situation and context. Both of the theories seem to be inextricable as Banks comments, 'all the literature on primordiality is followed by all the literature in instrumentality'.<sup>52</sup> If we look at ethnic issues more closely, instrumentality can serve to illuminate the task and purpose of maintaining ethnic groups and boundaries while primordiality can focus our attention on ways in which group identity factors and boundaries are managed and maintained. Epstein (a strong primordialist) said, '...there are situations in which ethnicity is active but does not seem to have any "aim" '.<sup>53</sup> I would argue that if ethnicity is active but has no aim, it would be either because the ethnic group is treated as healthy or the ethnic group does not realize the ill-treatment so that they do not have any aim; or perhaps the ethnic group realizes their ill-treatment but has no power to resist so that they prefer to be unproblematic.

#### 1.4.5 *Conclusion*

The question now for the agenda is: why there is ethnic unrest struggling for independence and bloody movements in various parts of the world (Asia, Eastern

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<sup>52</sup> Banks, 1996, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Epstein, 1978, 96-7.

Europe, Africa, etc. ). Journalists blame the manifestation of the primordial *ethnos*<sup>54</sup> and we need to investigate this from a biblical perspective in order to find clues and answers to this issue. In search of answers to the issues we will critically review the way these issues of ethnicity have been treated in the Matthean community based on the Matthean Gospel text.

Barth has stated the possibility of ethnic problems by saying that '*most critically, it allows us to assume that boundary maintenance is unproblematical and follows from the isolation which the itemized characteristics imply: racial difference, cultural difference, social separation and language barriers, spontaneous and organized enmity*'.<sup>55</sup> The journalists criticise ethnic groups for the break-up of the Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup> This is my hypothesis that ethnic unrest is the expression of the marginalized and disadvantaged ethnic groups' feeling of being ill-treated, and their demand for liberation. Until and unless the needs of these marginalized ethnic groups are met, there will be unrest and revolt, bloody events, a decline of economics and even the fall of a state. Before it is too late, this is the agenda for our task to study. This thesis will argue for equal treatment and liberation of the oppressed minority groups by using the Gospel of Matthew as a biblical text and draw application for ethnic issues in Burma.

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<sup>54</sup> Yulian Bromley and Viktor Kozlov, 'The theory of ethnos and ethnic process in Soviet social science', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1989, 31.3: 425-38.

<sup>55</sup> Barth, 1969, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Banks, 1996, 24; cf. Observer 3.9.89.

## 1.5 A Concise Description of Ethnic Issues in the Life of the Early Church

### 1.5.1 *Historical background of ethnicity in first century Judaism*

Ethnicity was of paramount importance in the formative period of Christianity. It was often confused and mixed with sectarianism for Christianity initially began with the religious movement of Jesus within Judaism.<sup>57</sup> In order to describe the issue of ethnicity in the formative period of Christianity, it is necessary first to assemble the relevant historical background in first century Judaism.

In all traditions of the early church we have ample evidence, particularly in the Hebrew scriptures, to believe that Judaism was founded on the central theme of covenant nomism. David Sim states well that the covenant was made between God and the people of Israel as his chosen people. The election of Israel gave the people special status vis-à-vis the other nations of the world. All those who are born Jews immediately become members of the elect, while those who were born into the other nations become outsiders of the covenant community in Judaism and they are known as the Gentiles in general.<sup>58</sup> This is the primary stage of two racial distinctions emerging in the history of Judaism and in Christianity.

In Judaism fundamentally the criterion for membership of the Jewish ethnic group was by virtue of birth; in later development the Gentiles seem to have had the

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<sup>57</sup>Anthony Saldarini, David Sim, and some other scholars vigorously argue that Christianity, particularly the Matthean community, originated within Judaism; see Anthony Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish-Christian Community*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994); David Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, ed. John Barclay, Joel Marcus, John Riches, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998). On the other hand Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for A New People: Studies in Matthew*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992, and others also have well documented their argument against. The position of Matthew's group will be dealt in chapter four of this thesis.

<sup>58</sup>David Sim, 'Christianity and ethnicity in the Gospel of Matthew,' in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, Mark G. Brett ed., (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 171-2.

opportunity to become members by conversion to obligations of the covenantal laws which entailed monotheism, circumcision for men as a sign of the covenant, Sabbath observance, and purity and dietary regulations, and some others.<sup>59</sup> The Jews retained their ethnic identity even when many of them were living in the Diaspora among larger populations of Gentiles, particularly in the second Temple period; for example, they maintained their identity by adhering to strict rules of purity and diet.<sup>60</sup> While the Jews strictly maintained their ethnic boundaries, it is interesting to see also that their view of ethnic privilege includes those Gentiles who participated in their religion.<sup>61</sup> Despite some disputes<sup>62</sup> it is commonly accepted that in the ancient world many Gentiles were attracted to Judaism, especially by its monotheism and its high moral requirements seen in the Hebrew scriptures and exemplified by many of the Jews themselves.<sup>63</sup> These Gentiles are classified as God-fearers who attended the synagogues and adopted certain Jewish ways of life. We see these people categorized in the book of Acts (10:2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26,43,50, 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7) and it is supported by the writings of Josephus (*C Ap.* 2.11; cf. also 14:7.2).<sup>64</sup>

We do not know in detail what aspects of Judaism exactly were adopted by Gentile God-fearers. E. Schürer suggests that the laws concerning Sabbath

<sup>59</sup> For detailed discussion of those law relating to the Jews, see E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63 BCE-66 CE, (London: SCM, 1992), 190-240. I point out four figures of law which I believe, are directly related to ethnic study.

<sup>60</sup> P.F. Esler, 'Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology', *SNTSMS*, 57; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 733-86 and other literature cited there.

<sup>61</sup> S. McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 30.

<sup>62</sup> A.T. Kraabel, 'The Disappearance of the "God-Fearer"', *Numen* 28 (1981), 113-26. See also T.M.Finn, 'The God-Fearers Reconsidered,' *CBQ* 47 (1985), 75-84, and other literature cited by Sim, 1996, 173, n. 6.

<sup>63</sup> L. H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 177-287.

<sup>64</sup> Sim, 1996, 173-4.

observance and dietary restrictions were widely adopted by the God-fearer Gentiles.<sup>65</sup> Probably the sojourner's laws in ancient Judaism were introduced to the God-fearer Gentiles in the second Temple period of Judaism. This would seem to be continued into the formative period of Christianity as a tradition. Consequently, Matthew deals with the practice of Sabbath observance (Mt. 12:1-8; 9-14; 24:20) and meal restrictions and purity of food (Mt. 15:21-8) for his community. We will deal with this in detail in chapters four and five of this thesis.

David Sim observes the Jewish reaction to Gentiles and categorizes them into three levels from the standpoint of the Jews: Gentiles who had no interest in Judaism, the God-fearer Gentiles, and the proselytes.<sup>66</sup> The God-fearers were different from those Gentiles who had no interest in Judaism and they were superior to them, but they were not counted as Jews. In fact they remained outside the covenant community. The proselytes who completely converted to Judaism were counted as part of Israel although we do not know how the Jews accepted them into the covenantal community. Gentile converts were indeed found in individual Jewish communities. This evidence demonstrates that although the question of race was crucial to the religion of Jews, they never restricted membership of their elect community only to those born Jews, and this is supported by Josephus' writing to Apion (*C Ap.* 2.37). Josephus points out that the Jewish practice of admitting Gentiles into their community is more humane and magnanimous than the practice of the Spartans who rarely granted citizenship to foreigners. If Josephus' comment

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<sup>65</sup> E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, revised by G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black and M. Goodman, 3 vols. in 4 parts, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973, 1979, 1986, 1987), 111. 1, 169.

<sup>66</sup> Sim, 1996, 174, cf. Schürer, *History*, 3.1, 165.

on the Jewish practice of admitting non-Jews is correct and that much simple or generous in granting membership to other ethnic groups, this would suggest that membership to the Jewish community was open to anyone regardless of their racial ethnic background and the opportunity was given in Judaism for complete assimilation of the converts. However, we will investigate the practice of accepting non-Jews into the Jewish community in due course.

Subsequently true converts were admitted to the community and differed from the God-fearers as they had spontaneously chosen to embrace the religion and practices of the Jewish life. So they enjoyed the full benefits of membership in the elect community, at least theologically. This enables us to see that Judaism consisted of the two primary ethnic groups of Jews and Gentiles. The socio-religious community of the Jews was not purely Jews by birth but a mixture of Jews and some Gentiles. Doubtless the requirement to full membership for men was circumcision of the foreskin (cf. Gen.17:9-14).<sup>67</sup> This evidence of Gentile male circumcision is confirmed by Paul's statement in Galatians that any Gentile man who receives circumcision is bound to follow the law in its entirety (Gal. 5:3). As with those racially Jewish, Gentile converts were required to be fully obedient to the laws in order to maintain their membership in their community. By maintaining this religious standard for Gentile converts, Judaism was able to admit outsiders into full membership with all privileges and maintained the community life without sacrificing its ethnic identity.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Sim, 1996, 175 and literature cited. We do not have concrete evidence for the entry requirement for women. Some scholars suggest 'baptism' as requirement for females. See McKnight, 1991, 148, n. 41.

### 1.5.2 *The Emergence of the Ethnic Issue in the Life of the Early Church*

One of the major issues in the entire New Testament study is the question of a law-free gospel in contrast to the law-observant gospel. This is a doctrinal debate on membership of the eschatological community, whether by faith alone (law-free gospel) or by faith in Jesus the messiah with faithful obedience to the law (law-observant gospel). Paul is the greatest defender of the law-free gospel, James and some other apostles including Matthew the evangelist are on the other side as law-observant gospel defenders. Although the issue is a doctrinal question, it can be said that the debate came to a crucial point when it was linked with ethnic issues. In another words, ethnic issues in the early Christian Church sharpened theological debates and church administration problems which we will describe now briefly.

In the formative period of the Christian church its members were Jews, according to the information in Luke-Acts. Initially they were the disciples and the family of Jesus with about a hundred other people (Acts 1:5) all of whom Luke refers to as Hebrews (cf. Acts 6:1). Luke gives no sign of Gentiles being approached by the apostles or accepted into the Christian community in Jerusalem at this stage. Peter addressed his speech to the Jews only in his early preaching ministry (Acts 2:5, 14, 22, 3:12) and only Jews were won over by his speech (cf. 2:41). At this time we do not see any ethnic issues arising as the Christian community was still largely, or even entirely Jews.

In fact the ethnic problems began only when the church won converts. The first new group to enter the church was a number of Greek-speaking Jews from the

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<sup>68</sup> Sim, 1991, 177.



Diaspora who now resided in Jerusalem, (see chapter 6 of Acts). Luke describes them as 'Hellenists' but they included at least one proselyte, Nicholas, among their number (Acts 6:5). It seems that the Hellenists expanded their own mission to the Greek-speaking synagogues of Jerusalem and caused the anger of the Jews there (Acts 6:9),<sup>69</sup> on the basis of criticism of the Law and the Temple, (Acts 6:13-14). The reason for the Hellenists' standpoint is disputed among scholars. M. Hengel and E. Haenchen believe that they merely followed Jesus' criticisms of the law and the Temple cult.<sup>70</sup> H. Räisänen believes that some Jews intended to allegorise the Torah and abandon its literal interpretation.<sup>71</sup> The opposition between the Jews and the Hellenists resulted in the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 6:8-7:60). This is the initial trouble the early Christian church encountered when the Hellenists, a sub-cultural distant ethnic group were converted. This persecution also led to the Hellenists' departure from Jerusalem (Acts 8:2). Despite the disagreements among scholars,<sup>72</sup> it is probable that the information given by Acts is correct that up to the time of the expulsion of the Hellenists the Jerusalem church was a Jewish community. The church did not have any internal ethnic issues yet, but it had the external problem that resulted in persecution presumably because of the Hellenists' extreme stance on the criticism of Jesus of the Temple and the Law. Additionally, the Hellenists may have favoured allegorising the law as did the group Philo opposed (*Migr. Abr.* 87.93).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Sim, 1991, 178.

<sup>70</sup> M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity*, (London: SCM, 1983), 22-4; E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 267-8.

<sup>71</sup> H. Räisänen, *Jesus, Paul and Torah: Collected Essays*, JSNTSS, 43, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 190-1. David Sim also agrees with Räisänen, see Sim, 1996, 178.

<sup>72</sup> Some scholars like Räisänen and Esler argue that the Hellenists extended their distinctive message to the Jews and to the Gentiles as well, see Räisänen, 1992, 186-8, Esler, 1987, 157-9. The problem with this is that we do not have sufficient evidence to support the thesis.

<sup>73</sup> See Räisänen, 1992, 190-1.

The practical internal problems of the church with the question of ethnicity began when the Christian mission was expanded to the Gentile world and when the Gentiles were admitted to the Christian communities. There is general agreement among scholars that the Gentile mission was started initially by the law-critical Hellenists who travelled to Antioch (Acts (11:19-20)).<sup>74</sup> The Hellenists firmly upheld their law-critical doctrine and suggested to the Gentiles that conversion to Judaism by circumcision and full obedience to the Torah were no longer required. By believing in the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth and his teaching, and by submitting to baptism anyone can become a child of God regardless of their racial, ethnic and religious background. Paul holds firmly to this version of the Gospel message since he settled in Antioch after his first visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18-20; Acts 11:25-6)<sup>75</sup> and he became its greatest defender throughout his entire ministry. Paul explicitly proclaims that Christ is the end of the Law (Rom. 10:4); therefore, there is no longer Jew or Greek (Rom. 10:12; I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; cf. Col. 3:11), circumcision or uncircumcision (Gal. 6:15); and anyone can fully enjoy the privilege of election as Israelites by having faith in Christ regardless of ethnicity, racial origins (cf. Rom. 3:22). In another words, this version of Christianity places both Jews and Gentiles on the same level and experiencing the same conditions for becoming children of God. This also permits Gentiles to be admitted to the Christian community without going through conversion to Judaism or some form of law-observant Christianity.

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<sup>74</sup> Among a number of scholars who discuss the issue, most distinctively notable scholars are W.A. Meeks and R. L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Centuries of the Common Era*, (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 13-14; M. Hengel, *Acts and the Earliest Christianity*, London: SCM, 1979, 99-100; J. P. Meier, 'Antioch', in R.E. Brown and J.P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 33; G. Luedemann, *Early Christianity according to the tradition in Acts: A Commentary*, (London: SCM, 1989), 136.

<sup>75</sup> Sim, 1996, 179.

Probably the anger of the Jewish Christians was caused by the introduction of the law-free gospel which lowered the position of the Jews and made them equal to Gentiles who formerly had no interest in God and the Law. The Pauline epistles and Acts clearly state that this law-free Gospel development was strongly attacked by certain members of the Jerusalem church. Luke describes these opponents as the circumcision party (Acts 11:2) for they insisted that male Gentile converts should be circumcised and obey the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:1,5). Paul also addresses them as the circumcision party, but even refers to them as false brethren (Gal. 2:4,12), and vigorously condemns them as amputators of the flesh (Phi. 3:2 cf. Gal. 6:12). Much of Paul's theological discussion in his letters to the Galatians and Romans was devoted to this agenda of the law - free gospel.<sup>76</sup>

According to Sim,<sup>77</sup> early Jewish-Christians accepted the ancient Jewish tradition of an eternal covenant between God and the nation of Israel in which the law played a significant role. They saw no abrogation of the fundamental principle of Judaism in the life and teaching of Jesus, rather the ancient covenant between God and his people is complemented in the new revelation of Christ the Messiah. Therefore, in the viewpoint of Jewish Christians the requirements for the Gentiles to join the Christian group is a step-by-step process; first a Gentile must believe in Jesus of Nazareth, then he must be circumcised (if male) and obey the demands of Torah. On the contrary, the Hellenists and Paul thought that Christian conversion was complete in belief in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. As such requirements of Torah are no longer valid once a person has faith in that Jesus. This

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<sup>76</sup> Sim, 1996, 179.

debate, then, is fundamental to each group and concerns their understanding and interpretation of Jesus' life and ministry. In any event, this theological debate is an ethnic issue in which the background of the participants shapes their likely response. For many Jewish-Christians the law was still central to religious life and eternally valid and they would have imposed that tradition upon all who joined the Christian community regardless of their origin. The Gentile Christians in line with the Hellenists, retained their strong view of the law - free Gospel and intended to abolish the law which they regarded as invalid.

Their ethnic problem was at the root of theological conflicts, and jeopardized the social welfare of the early Christians. The so-called apostolic council was convened in Jerusalem (Acts 15) to settle these ethnic issues. We have great difficulty in determining the resolution of the council meeting since our two sources (Acts 15:13-19 & Gal. 2:1-10) contradict one another in certain points. According to Acts, James the president of the meeting made a compromise statement which was accepted by both parties and was known as the apostolic decree (Acts 15:13-29). In this decree the Gentiles do not need to be circumcised and obey the whole law, but observe some of the sojourners' law in Lev. 17-18. This means that the Gentiles were allowed to become full members without converting to Judaism. This Luke-Acts narrative and Paul's stance in his letter to the Galatians contradict each other. In Galatians Paul did not have any intention of compromising his doctrine (Gal. 2:5). Paul continued to affirm his uncompromising stance by asserting that the leaders of Jerusalem added nothing to his defence after hearing him (Gal.2:6). P. J. Achtemeier

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<sup>77</sup> Sim discusses convincingly and looks at both sides of stance with sympathy and empathy and makes a balanced view, see Sim, 1996, 180-1.

accepts the compromise and believes that the issue of ethnicity in the Church had been settled.<sup>78</sup> It is difficult to believe that the compromise was agreed by the two parties while they were at extreme ends of the theological spectrum. Moreover, Paul notes several times the incident which occurred in Antioch after the council (Gal. 2:11-14): Peter came to Antioch and joined the table fellowship of Gentile Christians but when certain men arrived from Jerusalem he discontinued his table fellowship with the Gentiles. Paul overtly accused Peter of hypocrisy. Most scholars, however, believe that Paul lost the battle at Antioch and he was compelled to leave the city to start his new Gentile mission in Asia Minor and Greece where he won many converts to his law-free Gospel.<sup>79</sup> For our purposes we can see that ethnic issues determined perception and expectation in the new community; so that ethnic issues were the root cause of this theological debate.

Nevertheless Paul's letters describe that the controversy continued after the event in Jerusalem and in Antioch. In his letter to the Galatians Paul mentions that some of the circumcision party travelled to Galatia to impose their form of law-observant Christianity on Paul's Gentile converts. Paul's solution to the problem in Galatia and in Philippi was to send the letters to the Galatian church and to the Philippian church urging them not to accept circumcision (Phil. 3:2-11). This evidence shows that the issue of ethnicity within the Christian Church was not entirely solved in Jerusalem or in Antioch, and it continued to have effect on other Gentile converts in Galatia and perhaps other areas of Asia Minor. According to the pastoral epistles this ethnic issue

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<sup>78</sup> P. J. Achtemeier, *The Quest for Unity in the New Testament Church*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 42, 54-5.

<sup>79</sup> Esler, 1987, 87-8; F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, SNTSMS, 56; (Cambridge: University Press, 1986), 54-5; H. D. Betz, *Galatians*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,

continued to create problems throughout the lifetime of Paul and for his successors after his death (cf. 1Tim. 1:4, 6-7, 14; 4:3-5; 2Tim. 4:4; Tit. 3:9).

Since this unsolved ethnic problem remained throughout the entire ministry of Paul and continued with his successors, we would now soon turn to the Gospel of Matthew which is generally accepted to be written in post-Pauline era. We make our hypothesis that Matthew would have had some knowledge of the ethnic difficulties which occurred in the formative period of the Christian movement. Matthew's Gospel then, should contain some corpus relating to ethnicity and give us clues as to the specific nature of the problem in his own community<sup>80</sup>.

### 1.5.3 Conclusion

Ethnicity in the New Testament can be looked at from two ways of approach. First, the people of Israel as the elect people has great responsibility to uphold the covenantal laws and fulfil the duty of extending God's Kingdom to other nations as an instrumental ethnic group. One can investigate Israel's failure and success as chosen instrumental ethnic group from an ethnic perspective. Second, the two movements of Judaism and Christianity have inter-ethnic sociological developments and multi-cultural structure of both Jews and Gentiles. The research interest in this thesis is the latter one, that is to say, Judaism and Christianity could not exclude the two primarily ethnic groups, (Jews and Gentiles) but allowed them and mixed them together in the course of the history of the early Church. In the formative period of

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1979), 111-2; G. Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia*, *SNTSMS*, 35, (Cambridge: University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1990), 24-8.

<sup>80</sup> Paul's relationship with the Church of Antioch and his theological debate with the Jamesian party in Antioch is dealt within chapter four, see this thesis 118-134 for fuller discussion.

Christianity, Jews and Gentiles presumably formed a religious coalition in their new messianic movement. This gives the opportunity to look at the life of early Christianity and investigate their multi-cultural sociological structure from an ethnic perspective by analysing their anthropological background, cultural backgrounds and the impact of the Gospel to their religious life. The entire purpose of this project is to investigate the social community life of Jewish-Christians and Gentile converts in Matthew's church from an ethnic perspective with a sociological and historical approach.

As we have stated, if we look at the New Testament sketchily from a social anthropological point of view, there is explicit evidence that indicates the existence of multi-ethnic or at least the dualism of two ethnic groups from different cultural backgrounds emerging in almost every local community in the life of the early Church. At the very outset of the Christian community in the New Testament it was only the Jews (Acts 2). But very soon the Gentile converts were added to their communities and they became mixed ethnic groups. The Galatian church had such an ethnic problem that Paul stressed the issue in his letter to the Galatians. The Jerusalem council was convened to solve the ethnic problem of the Jerusalem church. Paul seems to have tried to solve this ethnic issue throughout his entire ministry.

It is presumable that having seen these ethnic conflicts in the very primary local Christian communities in different cities, Matthew wrote his Gospel and developed his materials from Mark and other sources for the purpose of his mixed-ethnic community. Matthew, according to our hypothesis, documented his material pertaining to ethnic concerns for the benefit of his community focusing Christian unity and consistent community life. Therefore, the Gospel of Matthew has been

chosen for our particular study of ethnicity assuming that the Matthean Gospel has significant evidence to draw patterns for today's contemporary world that is in great need of solutions to ethnic issues. We will critically study and analyse the social life of the Matthean community, and do critical study on selected texts related to ethnicity for finding biblical scholarly conclusions in relation to ethnicity from a sociological perspective.

We would like to summarize our thesis proposal for our use in this thesis. Firstly, we will use the definition of the term ethnicity as: collective name with shared norms, a shared language, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, a societal unit with a common or shared identity, an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity. Secondly, in terms of the two main theories currently developed in anthropological study, we argue that primordiality is the tool to define ethnic boundaries and instrumentality is the goal of active ethnicity, while recognizing the fact that there are also ethnic groups without any specific purpose. Thirdly, in response to Banton's theory on primary and secondary ethnicity we have argued and propose to apply the term Diaspora ethnicity in place of secondary ethnicity so that we have the terms 'primary ethnicity' and 'Diaspora ethnicity' in this project. Finally, in regard to different schools of thought on ethnicity in anthropological studies, especially on the issue of ethnic - silence, we argue that when ethnic groups are poorly treated and marginalized but there is no reaction from the marginalized ethnic group, it will be either because the group does not realize the ill-treatment or accepts ideological accounts which justify its oppression or is unable to raise its voice against the pressure. In such cases, it is essential and important that the minority groups should maintain tight boundaries and



closely integrated structures in order to maintain their identity and to build up solidarity and strength among the oppressed groups to negotiate their rights and privileges.

## Chapter Two

### **ETHNICITY IN DIASPORA JUDAISM AT THE TURN OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA**

#### **2.1 *Introduction***

Since the central theme of the thesis is to investigate the place of ethnicity in the Matthean community, it is essential to look at Diaspora Judaism at the turn of the Christian era from the ethnic point of view as the background of the Matthean community. That is to say, this chapter will focus on ethnicity in Diaspora Judaism during the Second Temple period in particular between the second century BCE to first century CE.

The interest in this chapter is the question of ‘what are the different socio-cultural factors which constitute ethnicity in Diaspora Judaism and how they are variously employed?’ It will also investigate the inclusion of members of other ethnic groups into the Jewish community and how those converts from other ethnic groups were treated. To answer these questions we will begin by attempting to define what we mean by Judaism and discuss the link between Judaism and the notion of Jewish ethnicity. We will critically examine the Jewish concept of their ancestry and of covenantal nomism as the hallmark of Jewish ethnic identity and the origin of Judaism. Then religious and socio-cultural factors which constitute and mark Jewish ethnicity will also be examined. We will examine features such as their attachment to the Land of Israel, and the Temple, their rejection of other nations’ religious cults, separation at meals, separation by Sabbath observance, male circumcision, and other

features in their community life in relation to ethnicity in Diaspora Judaism during the selected period, from the second century BCE to the first century CE. Our interest then concerns features of Jewish communal life as they relate to ethnicity.

## 2.2 Definition of the term 'Judaism'

If we look at the origin of Judaism few would deny that Judaism is an ethnic religion. Buddhism was founded on the teachings of Buddha and named after its founder, Islamic religion was founded on the teachings of Mohammed and his followers are called Muslims in connection with the name Islamic, Christianity is basically grounded upon the life and the teachings of Christ so the believers are called Christians; in distinction to other religious traditions Judaism is fundamentally based on the distinctively Jewish ethnicity which pre-supposes Torah piety.

In defining the term 'Judaism' scholars have attempted in different ways and perspectives. E. P. Sanders defines Judaism as covenantal nomism<sup>1</sup> while J. D.G. Dunn argues that it is to be defined by its 'pillars' of law, creation, covenant, monotheism and Temple, election, focused on the Temple and the Land<sup>2</sup>; and on the other hand N.T. Wright argues that Judaism should be defined by its significant stories, symbols, and praxis.<sup>3</sup> It is worthwhile to examine each of these theories.

As we have stated above E. P. Sanders most convincingly defines Judaism as covenantal nomism. The central point of Sanders' thesis is that in covenantal nomism, election and salvation are considered to be by God's mercy rather than human

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<sup>1</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, (London: SCM, 1977), esp. 75, 180, 236, 422-3, 426-8.

<sup>2</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, (London: SCM, 1991), 18-36.

<sup>3</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, (London: SPCK, 1992), 215-243.

achievement.<sup>4</sup> In Sanders thesis the pattern or the structure of covenantal nomism is that God has chosen Israel and given the law, which implies both God's promise to maintain the election and the requirement to obey. God rewards obedience and punishes transgression. At the same time the Law provides the means for atonement and the atonement brings good results to maintain or re-establish the covenant relationship. God's mercy belongs to those who maintain the covenant relationship by obedience, and by atonement indicate that they are the ones to be saved. For Sanders, in covenantal nomism obedience is the condition of remaining righteous. The righteous receive mercy and the wicked are punished, which implies again that election and salvation are the merciful act of God rather than human achievement.<sup>5</sup> Sanders attacks the traditional view that the Law made man righteous by observance, and argues that both the election of Israel and the salvation of Israel are the consequences of God's initiative and merciful natures. But the other facet of that mercy is that the righteous must maintain the covenantal relationship by obedience to the Law. For Sanders then, covenantal nomism, with its mutual obligations of obedience to the Law for Israel and merciful salvation from God is the core definition of Judaism

Dunn argues that Judaism should be defined by its central pillars. In attempting this definition, he suggests that there are four pillars; (1) monotheism, (2) the election of the people of Israel which made them a covenant people with a promised Land, (3) the covenant focused in Torah, and (4) the Temple and the surrounding Land.<sup>6</sup> For Dunn the belief in one God, (i.e. monotheism), is an important feature which made Judaism distinctive among other religions, and

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<sup>4</sup> Sanders, 1977, 422-3.

<sup>5</sup> Sanders, 1991, 422.

accordingly this should stand as a pillar that defines Judaism.<sup>7</sup> He states also the importance of the idea of election which is inevitably joined with the giving of Torah and followed by the role of the Temple and ideal of the Promised Land. Dunn agrees with E. P. Sanders in using the term covenantal nomism. The term highlights two key words that (a) Torah was given to Israel as part of God's covenant with Israel and (b) obedience to the law of Moses as Israel's response to God's choice of Israel to be his people. He defines 'nomism' as the way of living within the 'covenant', maintaining and manifesting status as the people of Yahweh.<sup>8</sup> Dunn sees the law as an expression of Israel's distinctiveness as the people especially chosen by God and that therefore the Law functioned as an identity marker and boundary with other ethnic groups.<sup>9</sup>

The Temple, in Dunn's viewpoint, plays the central role in the national and religious life of Israel, especially in the second Temple period. It became the central focus of the nation as national aspiration. The Temple is in fact supremely important for its significance as the religious centre at the heart of the city of God with the intertwined motifs of Jerusalem, Zion and the Temple as the focus of the elect people.<sup>10</sup> The Temple was not only a religious centre, but also had an economic role, and was significant politically as a centre for Jews throughout the Graeco-Roman world. That political power was exercised by the authorities and the priesthood over an area far broader than the religious observance of the Temple itself.

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<sup>6</sup> Dunn, 1991, 18-36.

<sup>7</sup> Dunn, 1991, 19-20.

<sup>8</sup> Dunn, 1991, 24, see also Sanders, 1977, 75, 180.

<sup>9</sup> Dunn, 1991, 25-6.

<sup>10</sup> Dunn, 1991, 33.

In Wright's discussion he divides the stories into two parts: basic stories and smaller stories. The basic stories are the stories of creation, election of the people of Israel, exodus and the monarchy of Israel, and their exile and return which are told in the Bible.<sup>11</sup> The smaller stories include smaller-unit stories either in part or in full which are found in both the Old Testament and the pseudepigrapha such as stories of Joseph and Aseneth, the book of Ruth, and the book of Judges etc.<sup>12</sup> For Wright the basic stories create symbols and praxis which become identities for Judaism; and if the stories are life stories of the people of Israel and in terms of the repeated motif of God's rescue for the people of Israel, then, there is intensification, new teaching, and re-interpretation of Torah, but these stories remain as key factors for Judaism.<sup>13</sup>

Wright correctly says that 'at the heart of Jewish national life, for better or worse, stood the Temple'. He goes on to say that 'all around looking to the Temple as its centre, lay the Land;' and consequently racial identity is a symbol for the definition of Judaism<sup>14</sup>. Torah was read and taught in the Temple and the Torah promised the Land, thus the Torah, the Temple, and the Land are major symbols. Since then for millions of ordinary Jews Torah became a portable Land and a moveable Temple.

Racial identity became a major issue at the point of the return from the exile in Babylon. The question of who was a pure Jew was a crucial issue. The long genealogies which open the books of 1 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah demonstrate the strongly felt need for a racial identity. The returning exiles were in search of the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The priests formed the inner circle of Israel

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<sup>11</sup> Wright, 1992, 215-19.

<sup>12</sup> Wright, 1992, 219-20.

<sup>13</sup> Wright, 1992, 222.

<sup>14</sup> Wright, 1992, 224-8.

and their genealogies were particularly important for this issue.<sup>15</sup> The practice of religion and religious celebrations are, for Wright, the praxis which stand as a key factor for defining Judaism. Wright argues that the general consensus that Judaism is not a faith but a way of life is a half-truth. He argues that in Judaism man must have faith in the one God and practise that faith in a life of observance of Torah and celebrations of the religious rituals and festivals. Particularly Sabbath observance, celebrations of the Passover, the Pentecost, Tabernacles, and the study and learning of the Torah are the praxis which stand as key features in defining what Judaism means in the story of the people of Israel.<sup>16</sup>

In my assessment the Hebrew Scriptures explicitly state that God chose Abraham and instituted a covenantal agreement with the promise to make him the father of many nations (Gen 17.1-8). The two parties, God and Abraham, entered into a covenantal agreement which was marked by the circumcision of Abraham and his household (Gen. 17.9-14; *Jubilees* 15,11-14, 23-25). Here circumcision stands for confirmation of Abraham's faith and obedience which would be understood as in accordance with the holy covenant (*Jubilees* 14.1-6). Therefore, circumcision and covenant become indispensable elements in the formation of Judaism which play throughout its history. Jewish self-awareness was an acknowledgement that they owed to Abraham the ties of blood and kinship (Gen. 12-14; Isa. 51.2; Mt. 3.9), and claim him as the father of the Jews and the founder of their race. Elsewhere Abraham is referred to as the father of the Jewish nation, (see above reference cited Gen. 12-14 chapters, Isa. 51.2; Mt. 3.9; etc. ) and the covenant God made with him is

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<sup>15</sup> Wright, 1992, 230.

<sup>16</sup> Wright, 1992, 233-5.

an inextricable element in identifying Judaism because it is the foundation of Judaism as a faith and of the Jewish nation as a race.

If the covenant is the fundamental formation of Judaism and the nation of Israel, it is implied that the religion of Judaism and the nation of the Jews were born at the encounter of Abraham and God at their holy covenant - a covenant whose visible sign was circumcision. Jewish ethnic identity and the key elements of their religion are therefore, inextricable. From the narrative of Jacob, the designation Israel was used to express both the nation, and the covenant relationship with God. The covenant is important, then, as marking the emergence of Israel's national consciousness. As John Riches correctly states, quoting *Jubilees* 15.25-32, "the sharpest formulation of the distinction between Israel and the nations comes in the section on circumcision following the circumcision of Abraham and his household."<sup>17</sup>

In examining the arguments of N. T. Wright, James D. G. Dunn, and E. P. Sanders, it is noticeable that both Dunn and Sanders use the same concepts of election, covenant, Torah or the Law as the norms to define Judaism. Dunn views those norms as supporting pillars and attempts to define Judaism there. Sanders sees those elements as the essential ingredients of the covenant. For Sanders the covenant is the origin and the primary source for the religion of Judaism. Wright attempts to define Judaism by stories, symbols, and praxis. I would like to argue that the stories are in fact the stories of the elect people, the symbols are the contents of the covenant, and the praxis is the practice of the Torah which is contained in the covenant. The

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<sup>17</sup> John Riches, *Conflicting Mythologies: Identity formation in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 27.



definition of covenantal nomism, therefore, defines the essential elements of Judaism, the holy covenant made between God and Abraham which constituted the people of Israel and their religion, as distinct from all other nations. The covenant, wherever it is mentioned, includes the Law, Torah. The Jews who belong to the covenant community are expected to uphold the commandments of God in the covenant in obedience to God. This means that all the members of the covenant community must maintain their membership by faithful obedience to the Law which God had given them. This Law emphasises the worship of one God, circumcision for males as the visible sign of the covenant, Sabbath observance, purity and dietary laws. These are the fundamentally important figures that distinguish the Jews from other ethnic groups in their multi-cultural Graeco-Roman world.<sup>18</sup>

The arguments of these scholars contribute a great deal to the issue and Sanders' argument seems to be most convincing in regard to the definition of the term Judaism. However, Sanders, Dunn, and Wright, all seem to have less interest in seeing Judaism as a strongly ethnic religion. In another words, although Sanders and other scholars acknowledged ethnicity in defining the term Judaism, they seem to give more emphasis to other issues such as Law, election etc. and it seems to be appropriate to look at Judaism from an ethnic perspective as well, in order that we may have a better view of Judaism and a more balanced definition. As we have argued already, the term Judaism itself has a link to the name of the ethnic - Jewish national and the land of Judah; and it traces back to Abraham as the founder of the nation and the receiver of the covenant upon which the religion of Judaism is established fundamentally. The requirements for entry to the community: by virtue of birth for the Jews and

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<sup>18</sup> For detailed discussion of the Jewish laws, see Sanders, 1992, 190-240.

converting to Judaism by confessing and practising Jewish religious traditions for the non-Jews, indicate the fact that one has to become a Jew by birth or by conversion in order to be saved or to be included in the covenantal community in terms of Judaism. This gives the impression that joining and practising Judaism is inevitably becoming a member of Jewish ethnic community. That is to say that Judaism is confined to the Jews only, and the only way to join Judaism for the non-Jews is to become a Jew by conversion to its religious beliefs and cultural practice. These elements point to the fact that Judaism is indeed an ethnic religion of the Jews. The Jews themselves also have the concept that Judaism is the religion of the Jewish ethnic group and the question is only how a non-Jew could join Judaism and become a member of the Jewish ethnic community. This was the initial step where ethnic and racial issue began to exist between Jews and the non-Jews (Gentiles). From the Jewish perspective they see all non-Jews as members of the Gentile ethnic group and by the same token Jews are members of the Jewish ethnic group which is distinct from all other such groups. The Jews understood Judaism as their ethnic religion and in many cases they perceived that practising Judaism is loyalty to the nation of Israel.

In the second Temple period the Jews struggled for both restoration of political and religious freedom i.e. Judaism. After the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70CE many of the Jews acknowledged their inability to regain political power from the Romans at that stage and surrendered to the authority of the Romans. They, then, gave up their political goal but tried to reform Judaism for the purposes of loyalty to God and to their national identity. It suggests that Judaism is a mark of national identity for the Jews and therefore Judaism and Jewish ethnicity are inseparable features for the Jews.

For the purposes of this dissertation, then, Judaism will be defined by the term covenantal nomism, and the elements that make up that definition are the starting points for analysis. The fundamental idea of covenantal nomism alongside notions of Law, covenant, Temple also includes national privilege prerogative and distinctiveness over against other nations (*Bar* 3.36-4.4; *Sol* 13.6-11; Philo, *Vit Mos* 2.17-25; Josephus, *C Ap* 2.38, 277-86). The Law provides marker for ethnic identity such as Sabbath observance, circumcision, monotheism and the means to set boundaries with other ethnic groups or nations, (*Jubilees* 22.16; *Ep. Arist.* 139, 142; Philo, *Vit Mos* 1,278).<sup>19</sup> It is a national privilege and responsibility, and of paramount important in the life of the Jewish people, as a constant reminder of their specific role and the covenant God made with their ancestors (*2 Macc* 8.15; *Pss Sol* 9.10; *CD* 6.2; 8.17-18; cf. *Deut* 4.31).<sup>20</sup>

The Jewish sense of their distinctive ethnic identity was also strongly linked with the physical descent from Abraham, who was the father of the nation and a participant in the first covenant and to the promise of the Land. Physical descent alone, however, has not always ensured membership of the covenant community. This marker of blood tie and kinship was nevertheless important whether in Palestine, in exile, or living in the Diaspora. The Land of Palestine is important as a sacred space and we shall deal with that in the following section.

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<sup>19</sup> See also J.D.G. Dunn, 'The Theology of Galatians: The Issue of Covenantal Nomism', in Jouette M. Bassler ed., *Pauline Theology*, Vol. 1, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 126.

<sup>20</sup> See also Dunn, 1991, 126.

## 2.3 Jewish Ethnic Identity Markers in the Life of Diaspora Judaism

Riches investigates the socio-cultural life of the Jews in the Diaspora and makes a very good note on his observation in relation to ethnicity:

Jews in the Diaspora regarded the world of the Hellenistic cities with everything from total acceptance, through critical enthusiasm, to profound suspicion and enmity. They spoke its language and translated their sacred writings into it. Many Diaspora Jews attended its schools and took part in the commercial and cultural life of the cities. Nevertheless, they stood out as a distinctive religious and ethnic group with their own ties of blood and distinctive customs.<sup>21</sup>

It is true that Jews in the Diaspora lived among other ethnic groups of people in the Hellenistic world and adopted their life and customs in varying ways but interestingly they maintained their distinctive religion and custom as a distinctive ethnic people in the midst of multicultural people in their respective locations. We shall now examine the different religious and socio-cultural factors which constitute Jewish ethnicity and become features of ethnic boundary markers in Diaspora Judaism.

### 2.3.1 *Blood ties and Kinship as Jewish Ethnic Identity Marker*

Belonging to a particular people by claiming to be the descendants of one particular figure is a key factor of one major facet of Jewish ethnic identity. In that regard Abraham is naturally regarded and claimed by the Jews as the father of the Jewish nation, and the founder of their race (Gen 12-24; Isa 51.2; Mt 3.9). Israel considers herself as the 'seed of Abraham' (Ps. 105.6; Isa. 41.8) and takes pride in being descended from Abraham (*Pss Sol* 9.17; *3 Macc* 6.2-3).<sup>22</sup>

As we have noted, a major facet of the distinctive Jewish ethnic identity initially began with the covenant between God and Abraham, marked by the

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<sup>21</sup> Riches, 2000, 21.

circumcision of Abraham and his household (Gen. 17.9-13; *Jubilees* 15.11-14; 15.23-25). The *Jubilees* text reinforces God's commandment for circumcision to be the sign of the eternal pact between him and his people and this law is valid for all history forever (15.25, 26, 27, 30). *Jubilees* furthermore draws a sharp line between the circumcised and the uncircumcised: 'the male who has not been circumcised – the flesh of whose foreskin has not been circumcised on the eighth day- that person will be uprooted from his people because he has violated God's covenant' (15.14). Circumcision, initiated by Abraham, had become the sign of Abraham's descendants, his offspring, and constitutes a Jewish ethnic identity marker. However, this does not mean that there was no conversion from other ethnic groups at all, and we shall discuss the inclusion of members from other ethnic groups in due course.

The Damascus Document from Qumran reaffirms the righteousness of Abraham, who was also called the friend of God with the motif of pride as the father and model for the Jews (*CD* 3.2).<sup>22</sup> Abraham was shown as perfect man in all of his actions with the Lord and considered as the model for the devout Jews in the first century among the Jewish people (*Jubilees* 23.10). He is portrayed as one who abandoned idols at the call of God (*Jubilees* 12; *Apoc Ab* 1-8). Josephus too proudly portrayed Abraham as the origin of their race and religion who not only denied idols but was also highly intellectual especially concerning the universe of God (*Ant* 1.154-5) which seems to intend the superiority of their origin to other races. Philo similarly praised Abraham (*Abr* 60-88) and he too portrayed him as their father which implies

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<sup>22</sup> See also J. D. G. Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, *Black's New Testament Commentaries*, (London: A & C Black, 1993), 159-160.

<sup>23</sup> See also Dunn, 1993, 160.

also the superiority of their race to others;<sup>24</sup> and for Philo, Abraham is also a universal figure. 1 Macc 2.52 also tells us that Abraham was the father of the Jews and the model of the faith under trial, (cf. Gen. 15.6; 22.17-18; James 2.23; also *Jubilees* 17.15-18). In *Jubilees* 17.15-18 the text presents Abraham's trial with Hagar and Ishmael, in which Abraham's expulsion of Hagar and her son Ishmael is counted as faithfulness to God. This perhaps implies an emphasis on Abraham's descent and the covenant established with Isaac, (cf. *m. Abot* 5.3).<sup>25</sup>

Josephus too asserts the superiority of Jewish ancestry to the Egyptian ancestry and its purity as he states that their race was not of Egyptian origin, and there was no mixture of the races, (*C Ap* 1.278-84). Josephus expressed pride in his race, saying, 'my family is no ignoble one, tracing its descent far back to priestly ancestors' (*Vita* 1).<sup>26</sup> This statement also claims the Jewishness of Josephus in an anthropological sense. Josephus' marked pride in his priestly ancestors has links to the concept of purity of descent which was a mark of Judaism<sup>27</sup> and for Josephus maintaining purity of priestly descent is linked to priests and their priesthood duties as the guardians of the national traditions (*C Ap* 1.28-38). By this they were able to claim their superiority over the Egyptians and the Babylonians; and their belonging to such a particular group by blood tie is an important mark in defining each person's identity.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See also Dunn, 1993, 160.

<sup>25</sup> For reckoning Abraham as righteous on this account, see *Jubilees* 30.17-19, cf. Ps. 106.31 which construct the righteousness of Abraham with the motif as the founder of Judaism and the origin of the Jewish race.

<sup>26</sup> Riches, 2000, 8.

<sup>27</sup> Riches, 2000, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Riches suggests that belonging to a kinship blood tie of a particular group is of the greatest importance in defining who a person was. It may be true in some contexts but for the Jews the covenantal nomism seems to be more important than their kinship and blood tie.

So far our evidence has provided that kinship and ancestral links are major factors which fundamentally constitute the Jewish ethnos and became an ethnic identity marker. However, physical descent is not sufficient unless it is accompanied by the covenantal nomism, that is to say, participation in the covenant and obedience to the Law, where circumcision is the sign. Only faithful observance of the laws which are contained in the sacred writings qualify them to be the people of the Jewish covenant community (Gen. 17.9-13; *Jubilees* 15.11-14, 23-25). Therefore, the primary Jewish ethnic identity marker is not simply being the descendant of Abraham but takes into account the two interlocking factors of biological descent and obligation to the covenant requirements, significantly marked by circumcision. The text of *Jubilees* draws a clear boundary line between the circumcised and the uncircumcised when it says, 'circumcision is the sign of the Lord. Those whose foreskin is not circumcised on the eighth day do not belong among the sons of the covenant, but they are marked out for destruction', (*Jubilees* 15.26).

While physical descent from Abraham and the covenantal mark of circumcision are primarily important for the formation of Jewish ethnicity, we must not ignore the vital importance of faithful obedience to the Law. We should be aware that not all physical descendants of Abraham became ethnically Jewish although they may have been circumcised. Ishmael and Esau with their descendants are neither Jews nor members of the covenant community. Ishmael was circumcised at the thirteenth year of his age (Josephus, *Ant* 1.193; 1.214). *Jubilees* explicitly indicates that 'the Lord did not draw near to himself either Ishmael, his sons, his brothers, or Esau. He did not choose them (simply) because they were among Abraham's children, for he knew them. But he chose Israel to be his people, (15.30).

Riches takes an implication from Jubilees 15:30 and suggests that God did not choose Ishmael probably because he knew that Ishmael would be disobedient.<sup>29</sup> Many other scholars seem to ignore the theological significance in the account of Isaac and the issue with the narrative of Ishmael.

The theological significance in the story of Isaac is the establishment of the covenant with Isaac, whereas the theological issue with the narrative of Ishmael is the exclusion of Ishmael and his offspring from the covenant community. Both the Genesis account and the Jubilees text reaffirm that God's covenantal promise is to be fulfilled by the son of Abraham with his wife Sarah, who will bear a son to Abraham and call him Isaac; and God will establish his covenant with him (Gen. 17.18-19; *Jubilees* 15.19). God's promise was quite plain and clear. But the fact was that Sarah was ninety and Abraham was a hundred (Josephus, *Ant* 1.213), and Abraham was distressed by his wife's infertility and Sarah also doubted her ability to bear a son in her old age. Moreover, the promise did not come into reality immediately. It took at least ten years to be fulfilled as Abraham waited ten years after he set out from Haran (1*QapGen* 22.27-29). The delay of God's action in fulfilling his promise and the actual physical condition of Sarah in her old age led them both to doubt and committed to having a child through Hagar. As a consequence, Sarah brought her slave-girl, an Egyptian named Hagar, to her husband so that her husband might have children by her (Josephus, *Ant* 1.186-87; cf. Gen. 13.18; 16.1). Jubilees emphasises that God would establish his covenant not through his illicit child but through his own child with his wife Sarah, as the text goes:

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<sup>29</sup> Riches, 2000, 40.



And after these things, in the fourth year of this week, on the new moon of the third month, the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a dream, saying, Do not be afraid Abraham: I am your defender, and your reward will indeed be great. And he said, Lord, Lord, what will you give me, for I have no children, and the son of Maseq, my slave-girl's son, Eliezer of Damascus, will be my heir: to me you have given no children. And he said to him, This *man* shall not be your heir, but your own son<sup>30</sup> shall be your heir. And he took him outside and said to him, look up to heaven and count the stars of heaven, if you can count them. And he looked up to heaven and surveyed the stars; and he said to him, So shall your descendants be. And he believed in the Lord; and it was counted to him as righteous (*Jubilees* 14.1-6).

Josephus also reaffirms the promise that Abraham shall have a son by Sarah and God's promise should be fulfilled through his son by Sarah, not by any slave-girl or foreigner (*Ant* 1.191; cf. Gen. 17.1). Abraham is to call his son Isaac, and God will establish his covenant and multiply his descendants. They would win possession, by war, of all Canaan from Sidon to Egypt. Furthermore, they shall keep themselves from mixing with others, and God charged Abraham to have them circumcised and to perform the rite on the eighth day after birth, (*Ant* 1.192). The Qumran literature also describes Abraham's doubts of having an heir by Sarah, so he asked God 'if one of his household servants will be his heir, Eliezer, the son of .... But the Lord said to him, 'This (man) shall not be your heir, but the one who shall come forth.' (*1QapGen* 22.33-34; *Jubilees* 14.1-3; Gen 15.1-4). Our sources clearly state that the doubtful thought and action of Abraham and Sarah resulted in their having Ishmael, their illicit child, for whom Abraham pleaded with God for the rights of heir.

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<sup>30</sup> Abraham's own son literally means 'one that shall come out of his own bowels'. See H.F.D. Sparks ed., *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 52, n. 1.

Later on in the course of God's intervention with Abraham, he realized God's sanction for Isaac and accepted Sarah's petition to expel Hagar and her son Ishmael (Josephus, *Ant* 1.216-7). Our sources present the significance of the covenant that God would establish through the son of Abraham by Sarah, who is called Isaac. God never changes his covenant agreement and never removes his promise to Abraham and Sarah, nor transfers it to any of their slave girls. The only concession for Ishmael, according to *Jubilees* 15:20, perhaps in honour of Abraham's prayer, is to bless him and make him great and multiply him greatly. He was also to be the father of twelve princes, and become a mighty nation (*Jubilees* 15.20). Nowhere does the literature indicate that God has any tendency to establish his covenant with Ishmael or any of Abraham's other children. It is only with Isaac whom Sarah would bear that God shall establish his covenant and fulfil his promise (*Jubilees* 15.21). The place of Isaac and the role he played in the covenant establishment of the Law signifies God's faithfulness to his promise, and his holiness in respect of the lawful marriage of Abraham and Sarah. Theologically it shows the unchanging attitude of God and his divine plan. When he said he would establish his covenant with Isaac the son of Abraham by Sarah, he never substituted that promise with any other.

The issue with Ishmael needs to be considered here. According to the Genesis account, at the outset God did not seem to have any interest in the birth of Ishmael. He did not disclose his charge to circumcise on the eighth day after birth at the time of Ishmael's birth. This charge, however, was given with the birth of Isaac and Isaac was circumcised in due course on the eighth day after his birth. In the case of Ishmael we only have Josephus' account that he was circumcised only in his thirteenth year (Josephus, *Ant* 1.193; 1.214). Despite Abraham's intercession for

Ishmael (*Jubilees* 15.18-20) God did not draw near to Ishmael because he knew him. As Riches suggested God knew that Ishmael would be disobedient.<sup>31</sup> Indeed Ishmael was disobedient. According to Josephus, God's charge to Abraham's lawful descendants to keep themselves from mixing with other nations and male circumcision go hand in hand (*Ant* 1.192). But Ishmael violated this charge by intermarriage with an Egyptian girl (Josephus, *Ant* 1.220).<sup>32</sup> Firstly, Ishmael was the illicit son and he was expelled by his father. Then Ishmael married a daughter of an uncircumcised<sup>33</sup> Egyptian and violated God's Law. Eventually his twelve sons became the Arabian tribes (Josephus, *Ant* 1.214; cf. *Jubilees* 15.20; Gen. 25.12-16) and subsequently they were outside the covenant. Josephus tells us that the Arabs defer the ceremony of circumcision to the thirteenth year, because Ishmael, the founder of their race, born of Abraham's concubine, was circumcised at that age (*Ant* 1.214).

J. Louis Martyn analysed the descendants of Abraham from the context of Galatians chapter four with a discussion of Abraham's two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, and draws a line that the descent with the slave girl became Abraham's illicit descendants. That is, through Hagar, Ishmael represents those who are not circumcised on the eighth day according to the Law of the covenant, that is, they are Gentiles. On the other hand, the descendants from the free woman, Sarah became

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<sup>31</sup> Riches, 2000, 40.

<sup>32</sup> Intermarriage was not an explicit charge here, but the charge to keep the descendants of Abraham from mixing with uncircumcised nations implies intermarriage between Abraham's offspring and other nations although it is violated in the history of the people of Israel, for instance, Joseph and Aseneth, and many intermarriage practised during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. However, in my opinion, this charge of keeping themselves from mixing with other nations does not apply to other nationals but to Israel, particularly in its ancient time.

<sup>33</sup> Although circumcision was practised during the Diaspora, it is presumable that by the time when Ishmael was expelled circumcision would have not been practised in Egypt.

the law-observant descendants of Abraham. The law-observant descendants formed the people of God, circumcised in their flesh and they are sons of the covenant.<sup>34</sup> They are the Jewish people and claim Abraham as their origin. In one of the Qumran texts, *1QapGen* 20.32 referring to Genesis, *Rabbah* xlv.1, Hagar was the daughter of Pharaoh.<sup>35</sup> However the fact is clear that Hagar was an Egyptian; daughter of an uncircumcised, a foreigner to the covenant community people, a slave girl. Therefore, even though Ishmael was the son of Abraham and he interceded for him to be his heir, God did not pronounce his covenantal blessing upon Ishmael but waited until Isaac was born by Sarah. This implies the paramount importance of the covenant for the origin of the Jews rather than the natural descent from Abraham.

To make the point more clearly, after the death of Sarah, Abraham married Katurah by whom he had six sons and his offspring from his six sons founded colonies and they took possession of Troglodytis and that part of Arabia Felix that extends to the Red Sea, (Gen. 25.1-4; Josephus, *Ant* 1.238-9). According to Josephus, Eophren, one of Abraham's grandsons through Katurah, led an expedition against Libya and occupied it and his grandsons settled there and called the land Africa after his name (*Ant* 1.239; cf. 1.133). In light of covenantal nomism, our evidence supports the fact that all Abraham's physical descendants are surely not the children of the covenant, only the descendants of Abraham by Sarah, who faithfully observe the Law, and who become the true children of Abraham and of the covenant. As we have discussed above, the descendants of Ishmael became the Arabian tribes although they were biologically the offspring of Abraham. Some of Abraham's

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<sup>34</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 450.

physical descendants by Katurah took possession and settled as far as in Africa and became entirely different nations or ethnos. Only the descendants of Isaac who faithfully kept the covenant became the true children of Abraham and formed the covenant community as one people of God.

We can deduce that ancestral links and blood ties are very important in Jewish ethnicity as their ethnic identity markers but it needs to be combined with faithful observance of the covenantal Law. These two interlocking factors constituted the nation of Israel and formed Judaism. These two factors bound the Jews together and made an ethnic group distinct from others and are the fundamental supports of Jewish ethnic identity.

### **2.3.2 *Attachment to the Land as Jewish Distinctive Ethnic Identity Marker***

Attachment to the Land is not necessary for Judaism but it stands as an identity marker in the life of the Jews in the Diaspora. Land and descent are linked to one another. The Jubilees text produces a reconstruction of a mappa mundi<sup>36</sup> based on Noah's division of the world for his three sons: Ham, Shem, and Japheth. They were located in a threefold division of the land from which all the nations descended according to the Hebrew Scriptures. The territory given to Shem extends from the Great Sea (the Mediterranean) in the west, to the River Tina (the Don) in the north, to the River Gihon (the Nile) in the south, and to the waters of the abyss in the east where Paradise is located. The map viewed from an east-west axis is drawn from Paradise through to Zion, to the straits of Gibraltar and running again on a

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<sup>35</sup> Michael A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 194.

<sup>36</sup> P. S. Alexander, 'Geography and the Bible' (Early Jewish), *ABD*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2, 977-88; also Riches, 2000, 26.

north-south axis through Sinai and Zion.<sup>37</sup> This map is the map of the Promised Land. It includes the sacred places which are located within and in direct relation to the Land of Israel and makes the territory of Israel distinct from other parts of the world. At the same time the geography reaffirms that Israel was placed in the centre of the world which seems to imply a responsibility to the world and additionally suggests that the story of Israel becomes the story of the centre of the world. This geographical map underlines the Land of Israel but also notes the locations of other nations and peoples in the Table of Nations, which affirms that all the peoples of the world are also in God's world and purpose. It demonstrates that all nations have their allotted territories but significantly, that the major sacred places are located within the Land of Israel.<sup>38</sup> According to Jubilees the sacred places play an important role in the belief and tradition of Judaism. The text profoundly states: 'And he knew that the garden of Eden was the holy of holies, and the dwelling of the Lord. And Mount Sinai (was) in the midst of the desert and Mount Zion (was) in the midst of the navel of the earth. The three were created as holy places, one facing the other (8.19).'<sup>39</sup> Here the text of Jubilees gives us three significant locations as sacred sites: the Garden of Eden, Mt. Sinai, and Mt. Zion. According to the text these are geographical sacred places and Jerusalem is regarded as the holy city, the city of God where the Temple is erected as centre for all the nations. Jackson and Henrie define sacred places as follows:

That portion of the earth's surface which is recognized by individuals or groups as worthy of devotion, loyalty, or esteem. Sacred space is sharply discriminated from the non-sacred or profane world around it. Sacred space

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<sup>37</sup> Riches, 2000, 26. For more details see also Alexander, 1992, 2, 977-88.

<sup>38</sup> Riches, 2000, 26.

<sup>39</sup> See also Riches, 2000, 25.

does not exist naturally, but it is assigned sanctity as man defines, limits and characterises it through his culture, experience and goals.<sup>40</sup>

As the map shows the triangle of holy places facing each other is located within the territory of Israel, which made the Land of Israel the sacred Land, regarded as worthy of devotion and loyalty. Like the modern Muslims visiting Mecca every year, the Jews especially in the Diaspora look to the sacred Land as the place to which they are bound in loyalty and in some special belonging. The sacred Land is distinctively marked by the holy sites: Paradise, Mount Zion, and Mount Sinai which are associated with God himself and the Jewish revelation – so making the places holy and sacred. Even when the people of Israel polluted the Temple and God is believed to have been absent in from the Temple, still Zion is regarded as holy place as the text states, ‘Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherubim on which it rested to the threshold of the house’ (Ezk. 9:3a) ‘The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; and the land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice;’ (Ezk. 9:9; cf. *Jubilees* 1.13; Ezk. Chs. 9-11)).

Indeed the Jews in the Diaspora adopted Hellenistic culture and life to varying degrees. Some of them identified with their fellow non-Jews. Yet many of the Jews, especially those who were in the low position in their social life felt themselves aliens and longed for their homeland. The feeling of being alienated in some parts of the Diaspora and the sense of belonging to the Land of Israel highlighted their distinctive Jewish ethnic identity among the other ethnic groups in the Diaspora. Diaspora literature traces Jewish origins back to Palestine (*Flacc* 45-46; cf. Josephus, *Ant* 3.245; *Bell* 7.375). And the concept of the holiness of the

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<sup>40</sup> R. H. Jackson and R. Henrie, ‘Perception of Sacred Space’, *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 3

Land was scripturally reinforced by Leviticus (Lev 20.22-26). In Leviticus God vomited the Gentiles from the sacred Land because of their abomination to the Land; and the Jews are also warned to create a clear boundary between them and the Gentiles otherwise they may also commit the same and be vomited out as their punishment.<sup>41</sup> This warning creates a boundary between the Jews and the Gentiles so that their attachment to the Land becomes one identity marker for the Jews even in their homeland.

In a sense it seems possible to assume that their living in the Diaspora, outside of the Land of Israel, is a consequence of and punishment for their disobedience. They considered themselves as sojourners in foreign lands and Philo hopes to return to their homeland (*Praem* 162-72). But there are different degrees of enthusiasm to return. Only those who were in low position in the Diaspora eagerly desired to return (*Sib Or* 5.260-85; cf. *3 Macc* 6.3, 10, 15, 36, 7.19)<sup>42</sup> while those who were in high positions considered their living in the Diaspora as their political achievement and looked to the world as their own homeland (Josephus, *Ant* 4.115-116).<sup>43</sup> Therefore, their attachment to the Land is different according to social and political position. The fact that those who were in low social position viewed the Land as their homeland and eagerly longed to return suggests that they were marginalized in their Diaspora and so they longed to return to their homeland where they could feel at home. On the other hand, those who were in high positions viewed the Land as the land of their ancestors and considered the Diaspora as their

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(1983), 94-107. Cf. Riches, 2000, 24-25.

<sup>41</sup> Riches, 2000, 32.

<sup>42</sup> See also Barclay, 1996, 422.

<sup>43</sup> See also Barclay, 1996, 422.



homeland.<sup>44</sup> This indicates that in a society the winners enjoy and take pride in their position, whereas the marginalized people look for their homeland where they expect equal treatment. There were, consequently, differing views of the Land of Israel in the Diaspora according to social and political position. However, it is clear that with different degrees they all recognized the Land either as their homeland or at least their forefathers' land.

In whatsoever position they might be, as Barclay sees it, collection of tax and dues brought the Jews from all over the Diaspora to Jerusalem, linked them practically and made them an international ethnos at the same time.<sup>45</sup> By this Jerusalem drew Jewish pilgrims from all over Diaspora (Philo, *Spec Leg* 1.69-70, Josephus, *Ant* 4.203-4)<sup>46</sup> which indicates their aspect of unity and attachment to the Land and its special value in the life of the Jews. The very names of the 'Jews' <sup>47</sup> and the name of their religion 'Judaism'<sup>48</sup> link people with their homeland, the land of Judah.

### **2.3.3 Attachment to the Temple as Jewish Distinctive Ethnic Identity Marker**

There is a close link between the Land and the Temple. The Jews regarded the Temple as sacred and holier than the Land. Alexander characterized it: 'the Land of Israel is holy in contrast to the rest of the world; Jerusalem is holier than the Land; and the Temple precinct in Jerusalem is holier than the rest of Jerusalem; and the

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<sup>44</sup> We could compare with the Egyptian writer, Artapanus, who refers to Palestine as the Jews ancient homeland, *Artapanus* 27.21; see also Barclay, 1996, 422.

<sup>45</sup> Barclay, 1996, 422; cf. Acts 18.2-3.

<sup>46</sup> See also Barclay, 1996, 423.

<sup>47</sup> Barclay, 1996, 422.

<sup>48</sup> I have discussed it in this chapter in section 2.2, 40-48 that the name Judaism is distinct from other religions and has the motif of their ethnos name Jew, and the land of Judah.

holy of holies in the Temple is holier than the rest of the Temple.’ In relating to the holiness of the Temple, priestly ideology affirms that God’s presence in the Temple is a confirmation of its holiness and that of the Land as well.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, when the people of Israel polluted the Temple and the Land by their unfaithfulness to God’s ordinances, or the failures of Israel in concern with the covenant, and observance of the Sabbath, it was regarded as Israel committing immorality and idolatry and God abandoned the Temple, (cf. Ezek 9-11; *Jubilees* 1.10; 1.13).

Philo had quite a specific view of the Temple which implies the inclusion of other nationalities and of the Jews in the Diaspora and summoned them:

The highest and most holy temple of God is the whole universe with heaven as its sanctuary, but as it is right not to inhibit those who want to give thanks or ask for forgiveness by offering sacrifice, one Temple has been established ‘for he judged that since God is one, there should also only be one Temple. This means that those who live outside the Land have to bring themselves to ‘leave country and friends and kinsfolk and sojourn in a strange land.’ (*Spec Leg* 1.67-8)<sup>50</sup>

It was regarded as the one perfect Temple (Josephus, *Ant* 13.242, Philo, *Legatio* 157). Philo’s statement is clear that those who live outside, that is, in the Diaspora, have to bring themselves to the one Temple. Therefore, their attachment to the Temple is one feature that marks the distinctive identity of the Jews even in the Diaspora.

Also in the Land itself Josephus says that their association with the Temple was one of the key factors which distinguished the Jews from the Samaritans who had formerly had their own Temple on Mt. Gerizim (Josephus, *Ant* 13.74-79). The

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<sup>49</sup>See Riches, 2000, 32, n. 20 and literature cited there.

<sup>50</sup>Also Riches, 2000, 22, n. 2.

Jews collected Temple dues every year and each male had to pay the half-shekel tax on the basis of Exod. 30.11-16.

The amount of collected Temple dues varied according to the size of the local community; nevertheless all communities in the Diaspora were involved in collection of the tax. This collection of Temple dues is evidenced by the political crisis in Cyrenaica caused by collection of the money (Josephus, *Ant* 16.169-70). The same political difficulty was experienced in Asia (Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 29.68-69; Josephus, *Ant* 16.162-68, 171-73, etc.) Philo depicts its effects in Egypt (*Spec Leg* 1.76-77), in Rome (*Legatio* 157, 291, 312-13), and in the Eastern Diaspora (*Legatio* 216; cf. Josephus, *Ant* 18.312-13). This evidence of collecting Temple dues from all over the Diaspora is supported by the Roman assumption that all Jews were liable to pay and this is the reason for their diversion of the Temple tax into the *Fiscus Iudaicus* after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>51</sup>

Philo believes that this collected money is a ransom for the individual's soul (cf. Exod 30.12) and this could make salvation for their soul and physical welfare as well (*Spec Leg* 1.77-78). The money was collected at various times during the year and was deposited in a communal bank, then it was sent to Jerusalem annually.<sup>52</sup> This testifies to the attachment of each local community in the Diaspora by faithfully bringing their dues to Jerusalem and also binds the individual closely to the community as a Jewish social ethnic community group. It also reinforces the local community's commitment to the Temple. When this tax was transmuted, after 71CE, into contributions for the *fiscus Iudaicus*, it became compulsory for every

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<sup>51</sup> Barclay, 1996, 418.

<sup>52</sup> Barclay, 1996, 418.

individual, male and female, child or adult to be publicly identified as a 'Jew.'<sup>53</sup> As M. Goodman correctly comments, although the poll was not warmly welcome it made the Jews realize their social and political distinctiveness in the Roman empire.<sup>54</sup> Collection of Temple tax was primarily a religious duty, but it became a social duty and a marker of Jewish ethnic identity in the Diaspora because it was paid only by the Jews which reinforces their distinctiveness to others and that confirms also their attachment to the Temple.

### ***2.3.4 Jewish Ethnic Identity in their Religious Life and Practice***

#### **Introduction:**

Riches states the fact that Jewish monotheism was set sharply against the polytheism of the cults in their Graeco-Roman world.<sup>55</sup> John Barclay discusses four features that keep the Jews unique and distinct from their neighbouring ethnic groups.<sup>56</sup> Those features are: Jewish cultic abstention, separation at meals, circumcision for males, and Sabbath observance. Although Judaism sharply claims a belief in one God, monotheism is not enough to define Judaism and Jewish identity. Jews were not alone in believing the One God as universal God in that period. Philosophically some intellectuals understood Plato to have recognized a Supreme Being. For example, Philo follows Platonism in many ways of thought in the first century CE. So we need to define the Jewish distinctive identity in Judaism in the

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<sup>53</sup> Barclay, 1996, 418.

<sup>54</sup> M. Goodman, 'Nerva, the Fiscus Judaicus and Jewish Identity,' *JRS* 79, 40-44; see also Barclay, 1996, 418.

<sup>55</sup> Riches, 2000, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Barclay, 1996, 429-442.

negative terms of their rejection of the alien cults and their practice as listed in the four features above.

#### A . Jewish Ethnic Identity by Rejection of other Nations' Cult

The *Letter of Aristeas* (134-38) mentions the belief of other nations in many Gods, and making many images of wood and stone, and creating mythologies or worshipping animals. The other nations believe God is the creator of human moral capabilities, the model for just behaviour to act justly.<sup>57</sup> But Mosaic Law erects an iron wall between the Jews and other nations. The Law warns God's people not to mix with other nations, in order to preserve their body and soul pure. They are summoned to separate from false beliefs (Deut 6.14; 12.30-31; 29:19-28; Leviticus 11). The religion of other nations, is polytheism, although they acknowledge God as the controller of universe, (in the Letter of Aristeas cited above) is simply assumed as false religion. Only the Jews' belief and worship of the One God is taken as true religion and this becomes a boundary marker between Jews and other nations in their social world. In the literature of the Diaspora, God is defined as the God of Israel or the ancestral God of Israel (*3Macc* 5.113;7.16; *Joseph and Aseneth* 7.5;11.10).

On some occasions Philo recognises that others have a correct conception of God (*Virt* 65; *Spec Leg* 2.165) but he also acknowledges that all non-Jews worship 'created Gods' (*Spec Leg* 1.65-66). Josephus (*C Ap* 2.193) and Philo (*Spec Leg* 1.67) affirm the only One God, and the only one Temple for the One God. One Temple implies the superiority of the God of Israel to other gods, and attachment to the

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<sup>57</sup> For Aristeas' 'theology of grace' see G. Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 BCE-200CE*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 161-85.

Temple for all Jews who believe and worship the one God. It also implies the mission of the Jews to correct the false beliefs of other nations. It is true in the view point of the Jews that the God of Israel is the One true God and other nations' religion of polytheism is a false cult. So the rejection of the alien cult is a boundary marker between the Jews and other nations in their ethnic identity.

Gentile polytheism is also an insult to the monotheism of the Jews as the worship of many Gods means worshipping the agents and subordinates of the One God (Philo, *Conf* 168-73). The second commandment in Exod. 20.4-6; Deut. 5.8-10 rejects the polytheism of other nations. On the other hand, the non-Jews interpret the Jews' imageless cult as the worship of sky and clouds (*Hecataeus apud Diodorus* 40.3-4; *Juvenal, Sat* 14.97; *Strabo* 16.35; *Petronius frag*, 37, etc.). This indicates the tension, or at least the distance between Jews and other nations in interpreting each other's religion. Riches also makes the point that Jewish rejection of pagan worship remained one clear mark of their identity.<sup>58</sup> This seems to be seen in most of the Diaspora.

#### **B. Jewish Ethnic Identity by Separation at meals**

The distinctive dietary laws of the Jews were read and expounded in the synagogues every week as it was a part of the Jewish constitution.<sup>59</sup> By listing the forbidden foodstuffs and abstaining from certain items (Lev. 11; and Deut. 14) the Jews made their boundary with other ethnic groups. *The Letter of Aristeas* (142-71) and Philo (*Spec Leg* 4.95-131) explained in more detail why pork is the most awkward or offensive item for the Jews as it was viewed as seriously unclean food.

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<sup>58</sup> Riches, 2000, 4.

This prohibition was frequently commented on by the Gentiles. Eating of blood also frequently appeared as forbidden food for the Jews (Deut. 12.16, 23-24; Acts 15.20, 29) and *Joseph and Aseneth* 8.5 (cf. Philo, *Spec Leg* 4.122-23).<sup>60</sup> More seriously participation in eating food which is sacrificed to idols is strictly prohibited (Num. 25). Separation between food which is sanctified and the unclean food which is sacrificed to idols is sharply distinguished and Jews were warned against mixing whether the location is a Temple or in a private house in their common social association.<sup>61</sup> It seems that the Jewish common people were more conservative than the educated class in terms of food laws (Philo, *Migr Abr* 89-93).

As the result of Jewish dietary law which separates them from other ethnic groups, the Jews were viewed as unsociable, even misanthropic.<sup>62</sup> They sit at separate tables (*Tacitus: separata epulis*, *Hist* 5.5.2). The only possible ways for Jews to dine together with Gentiles were, if the Jews were the hosts and offered meals without offending against their food laws, or if they brought their own food to Gentile homes, or ate only specific foods from the foods provided by Gentiles (*Judith* 12.11-4,19. Philo, *Vita* 14; Rom 14.1-2).<sup>63</sup> Therefore Philostratus criticised (*Vita Apollonii* 33) Jews for living unsociable life, 'Sharing no common table-fellowship with others, nor libations, prayers of sacrifices'.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Barclay, 1996, 434.

<sup>60</sup> See also E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah. Five Studies*, (London: SCM Press 1990), 287-9.

<sup>61</sup> Barclay, 1996, 434-5. For more detailed discussion see P. D. Gooch, *Dangerous Food: 1 Corinthians 8-10 in Its Context*, 1993.

<sup>62</sup> Barclay, 1996, 436.

<sup>63</sup> See also Barclay, 1996, 435; for far more detailed discussion see Sanders, 1990b.

<sup>64</sup> Barclay, 1996, 437. For more detail study see *Hecataeus apud Diodoru* 40.3-4, and *Apollonius Molon apud Josephu*, (Josephus, *C Ap* 2.148-258)

This separation at meals by observance of the dietary laws was intended to sanctify the Jewish nation (Lev 11.44-45), and by observing the food laws the Jews considered themselves being made holy to God (Lev 20.24-26) and distinguished from other nations. 3 Maccabees comments that their food laws made the Jews separated from others and hateful in the eyes of some (3 *Macc* 3.4). Josephus treats it positively and sees that the food laws cover every part of life and makes the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable people groups (*C Ap* 2.173-74; cf. *Ant* 4.137-39).

Although all the Jews were not strictly faithful to their dietary laws,<sup>65</sup> generally speaking, the dietary law is a rejection of the alien in their social life. It creates distinctions between the Jews and non-Jews which becomes an ethnic boundary marker. In this way the Jews keep their Jewish ethnic identity solidly through daily practice.

### C. Jewish Ethnic Identity by Male Circumcision

In the eastern Mediterranean circumcision was common among many ethnic groups in their native tradition.<sup>66</sup> Herodotus (2.104) claimed that circumcision was common among Ethiopians, Colchians and Syrians in the fifth century BCE (cf. Philo, *Spec Leg* 1.2). However, Roman writers indicate that circumcision was a unique mark of the Jews and this characteristic of a Jewish male is the surest proof of his Jewish origin.<sup>67</sup> In a Roman court a male is examined physically for his liability

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<sup>65</sup> It was not always possible for every Jew to observe their food laws strictly. For instance, if the civic authorities were not supportive of the Jewish laws, (Josephus, *Ant* 14.245, 261); or if Jews were in shortage of army rations (*Ant* 14.226); see also Barclay, 1996, 435.

<sup>66</sup> Barclay, 1996, 438.

<sup>67</sup> Barclay, 1996, 438.



to the '*fiscus Iudaicus*' (Suetonius, *Domitian* 12.2, cf. *Satyricon* 102.14). Tacitus also acknowledges that the Jews practised circumcision so that they can be distinguished by this difference of physical mark (*ut diversitate noscantur*, *Hist* 5.5.2).<sup>68</sup> Josephus affirms circumcision as of maximum importance for the Jews to maintain their ethnic identity (*Ant* 1.192). Philo gives its social significance for the Jews and criticises pure allegorists on the subject of circumcision (*Migr Abr* 89-93). He insists that circumcision should be preserved by the Jews as their identity marker.

In practical intermarriage, circumcision becomes a boundary between Jews and non-Jews. Tacitus writes that Jews 'sleep apart' and refrain from intercourse with foreign women (*discreti cubilibus...alienarum concubitu abstinent*, *Hist* 5.5.2).<sup>69</sup> Josephus considers separation of male Jews from foreign women as keeping the nation pure, (*C Ap* 2.69). In the story of Dinah and the Shechemites (Gen. 34), Dinah was not allowed to marry a man with a foreskin (Gen. 34.14), indicating the strict role played by circumcision in intermarriage between Jews and foreigners. The story furthermore indicates that if the Shechemites were circumcised they could then freely intermarry with female Jews and be counted as members of the same race (Gen. 34.15-17; cf. *fragment* 3, apud Eusebius, *Praep Evang* 9.29.1). Josephus also records, in line with their tradition, that certain Gentile men were required to be circumcised and adopt Jewish rites before they could marry the members of the Herodian family (*Ant* 20.139, 145-46). Josephus strongly insists on circumcision as a means of preventing Abraham's offspring from mixing with others (*Ant* 1.192). Philo, negatively, calls the uncircumcised an alien seed (*Quaest Gen* 3.61). In

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<sup>68</sup> See also Barclay, 1996, 438.

<sup>69</sup> See also Barclay, 1996, 411.

Josephus' writings it is clear that proselytes (male) were required to get circumcised in order to be accepted as Jews (*Ant* 20.38) and circumcision is also the mark of conversion and commitment. As such circumcision stands as a mark for male showing their Jewish distinctiveness from other nations and it becomes a strand of Jewish ethnic identity.

In 1 and 2 Maccabees circumcision was one of the reasons for which the Jewish martyrs had died (1 *Macc* 1.48-50; 2 *Macc* 6.10). In Jubilees it was the required and essential mark of the converts; failure to circumcise caused destruction (*Jubilees* 15.26). Jubilees believes that even the angels were circumcised from the moment of their creation (15.27) and that heavenly order is to be practised as a model for the life of the Israelites.<sup>70</sup> Circumcision reinforced the wall between the Jewish people and others as distinct from one another when the Jubilees text explicitly indicates that the circumcised are called the 'sons of the covenant' and the uncircumcised are called the 'sons of destruction' (*Jub* 15.26). Thus it makes a sharp boundary between the insider and the outsider of the covenant. The circumcised are further acknowledged as being under the protection of the angels whereas the uncircumcised are under the power of the evil spirits.<sup>71</sup> In the Qumran community life circumcision stands as a clear boundary between the circumcised and the uncircumcised. It also acts as a metaphor in the Qumran community with the emphasis on spiritual circumcision as the literature goes: "circumcised ears can hear God speak the truth (1*QH* 18.20); uncircumcised lips cannot speak God truly (1*QH* 2.7-8). This does not mean that the members of the Qumran Community were

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<sup>70</sup> Riches, 2000, 49.

<sup>71</sup> Riches, 2000, 49.

distinct from other Jews by circumcision; for the Qumran Community only spiritual circumcision makes them different from other Jews, thus it is here to stress the fact that circumcision was a common Jewish ethnic identity marker practised by all the Jews, both the Qumran Community and the main Jewish group, which made them separated from the non-Jews at their table fellowship. Therefore, it is adequate to assume that circumcision is a strand of Jewish ethnic identity in the Diaspora during the Second Temple period at the turn of the era.

#### D. Jewish Ethnic Identity by Sabbath Observance

The Jewish Scriptures well highlight Sabbath observance (Exod. 20.8-11; Exod. 16.22-30; Num. 15.32-36) which is considered as God's special representation (Gen. 2.1-3). Philo takes very seriously the application of the death penalty to a transgressor of the Sabbath law (*Spec Leg* 2.249-51; *Mos* 2.209-20). By seeing the majority of Alexandrian Jews' conservative concept of the Sabbath in Philo (*Migr Abr* 89-93) and the cry of the Jews when a governor of Egypt prohibited Sabbath observance, (*Somn* 2.123-24), we get the impression that Sabbath was seriously observed. The Jewish Scriptures affirm that the Sabbath was a sign of their unique identity in relationship with God (Exod 31.12-17).

Sabbath observance effected military service in the Graeco-Roman world in that the Jews refused to bear arms and march on the Sabbath (Josephus, *Ant* 14.226; cf. Agatharcides apud Josephu, *C Ap* 1.209). During the Maccabean wars after initial defeat the Jews felt justified in defending military action or commands on the Sabbath (Josephus, *Ant* 12.274-77; 14.63-64). At least in Asia, in the first century BCE, it

seems possible for Jews to claim exemption from military service on the ground of their Sabbath observance (Josephus, *Ant* 14.226, 228, 232, 234).<sup>72</sup>

Another fact of Sabbath observance is evidenced in its effect on financial or legal affairs on the Sabbath. Philo explains that all forms of work which involved money or one's earning for livelihood is prohibited (Philo, *Mos* 2.211, 219). Jews refused to engage in financial or legal matters on the Sabbath up to the point of losing their business (Josephus, *Ant* 14.262,-64; 16.27, 163, 167-68). Philo also records the refusal of Roman Jews to collect the dole on the Sabbath (Philo, *Legatio* 158). In Antioch also the Jews refused Antiochus' order to work on the Sabbath which Antiochus regarded as the same as other days (Josephus, *Bell* 7.52). On the one hand, in the 40s BCE Miletus granted the Jews the right to observe the Sabbath as a holy day and a day of rest (Josephus, *Ant* 14.244-46). Halicarnassus issued an order in support of the Jews' Sabbath observance stating that anyone preventing the Jews from Sabbath observance should be fined (Josephus, *Ant* 14.256-58).<sup>73</sup> In the Augustan era Nicolas Damascus complained to Agrippa that Jews in Ionia were forced to get involved in business affairs and appear in court on their 'holy days' (Josephus, *Ant* 16.27, 45).<sup>74</sup>

Jewish disobedience of the Roman authorities when forced to work or engage in affairs on the Sabbath demonstrates their strict observance of the Sabbath; and its peculiarity to the non-Jews. This indicates the uniqueness of Jewish tradition. Their observance of the Sabbath as a ritual and ancestral custom stands as another factor of ethnic boundary between Jews and other nations. In short, Sabbath

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<sup>72</sup> See also Barclay, 1996, 441.

<sup>73</sup> Barclay, 1996, 270.

observance is a key factor in maintaining the ethnic boundary which keeps the Jews separated from all other people in the wider society.

### **2.3.5 Jewish Ethnic Identity Markers in their Social Community Life**

We have examined the features which make up Jewish ethnic identity markers as, 1) blood tie and kinship, 2) attachment to the Land, 3) attachment to the Temple, 4) and their isolation by rejecting other nations' cults, 5) their separation at meals, 6) their separation by circumcision, 7) and their distinctiveness by Sabbath observation. We shall now finally try to examine the daily social community life of the Jews in the Diaspora and attempt to find out the strands which bound them together solidly and made them a distinct ethnic group in the Hellenistic world of their time.

At the local community level the Jews practised prayer meetings in certain private houses, and sometimes they had informal meetings in the open air, (Schürer 3.92-102)<sup>75</sup>. These informal meetings were recognised by the Jews as their simplest form of community life and it helped them to associate with one another in their social, economic and political affairs. It seems that they promoted their local community life from informal to formal meetings and operated their own courts, maintained their own archives, having their own catacombs, constructing and maintaining their own buildings with their own architecture,<sup>76</sup> electing their own

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<sup>74</sup> Barclay, 1996, 270.

<sup>75</sup> See also Barclay, 1996, 414.

<sup>76</sup> For distinctive architecture and design, see Diana Edelmann 'Ethnicity and Early Israel', in Mark G. Brett ed. *Ethnicity and the Bible, Biblical Interpretation Series, Vol 19* (1996), (Leiden: E. J. Brill), 42-55. Edelmann's discussion is of course only of the ancient Israelites, but if we compare with Barclay's attempt in this regard, Barclay, 1996, 414, it is probable that the Jews maintained their

representatives and officials, voting their own creeds, and negotiating their civil rights with the authorities.<sup>77</sup>

The celebrations of festivals were also another factor that bound the Jews together and identified them as distinct from other ethnic groups. They observed and celebrated significantly the Passover, Tabernacles, the Day of Atonement, (Josephus, *Ant* 14.257-58; 16.27, 45; cf. Gal 4.10; Col 2.16). The Day of Atonement was importantly observed in the Diaspora communities (Josephus, *Ant* 3.240-43; Philo, *Spec Leg* 2.193-203). In Cyrene and Egypt the feast of Tabernacles was more public and formal in their community (*CPJ* 452a; Philo, *Flacc* 116-8; cf. *Luderitz* 71). In addition to those significant feasts they also celebrated other important feasts in the Jewish calendar such as the new moon (Philo, *Spec Leg* 2.140-44; *Luderitz* 70, 71; Col 2.16; *Epistle to Diognetus* 4.1, 5)<sup>78</sup> commemorating deliverance from persecution (*3 Macc* 6.30, 36; Josephus, *C Ap* 2.55). These annual celebrations and observance of feasts bound the Jews together and enabled them to form solid communities in religious, social, and financial affairs in the Diaspora (Josephus, *C Ap* 2.282; Paul in Gal 4.10; Col 2.16).<sup>79</sup> As the Jews were bound together by those religious practices they became more solidly associated with one another in religious, social, and political affairs which in return became another solid identity marker of the Jews and ethnic boundaries with other ethnic groups in the Diaspora.

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ancient architecture and design in the Diaspora. For fuller discussion see Barclay, 1996, chapters 2, 3, 8-10.

<sup>77</sup> Barclay, 1996, 414.

<sup>78</sup> J.C.G. Thornton, 'Jewish New Festivals, Galatians 4.3-11 and Colossians 2.16,' *JTS* 40 (1989), 97-100. See also Barclay, 1996, 415, n. 24.

<sup>79</sup> Barclay, 1996, 414-416.

## 2.4 Expulsion and Inclusion of membership in Diaspora Judaism

At the beginning it seems that anyone who was born a Jew immediately became a member of the covenant community. In later interpretation it was necessary to add observance of the Mosaic Law to the privilege of birth. In the process, membership was no longer by the virtue of birth but a matter of choice. In the Diaspora some Jews who were Jewish by birth abandoned their ancestral customs and belief and joined the non-Jewish community. For instance, Dositheos, son of Drimylos is recorded as a Jew by birth but he changed his custom and abandoned his ancestral creeds or belief and assimilated to the non-Jewish community (3 *Macc* 1.3). There were, however, certain rules for the welfare of the community and to protect the community identity. Some of the rules were enforced by the penalty of death<sup>80</sup> and most of them give the penalty of expulsion from the community with different degrees depending on the deviations. This means that in addition to the personal choice either to maintain his membership of the covenant or to abandon it, there is also the action of expulsion from the community as the penalty of transgression.

In the Qumran community the community rules were strictly observed for the purity of the sect individually and collectively. The covenant theological motif (1*QSb* 1 2; 1*QS* 6.14f. *CD* 3.12-14; *CD* 15.9; 4.9f) and the holiness theological motif (*CD* 3.12ff; 1*QS* 9.12) were considered to be the basis of the community rule.<sup>81</sup> Practically the members who committed sins such as idol worship (1*QS* 2.11-17 cf. Deut. 29.9-20)), defiance of God (1*QS* 8.16ff; cf. *CD* 20.30; 1*QS* 5.11),

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<sup>80</sup> See Goran Forkman, *The Limits of the Religious Community: Expulsion from the Religious community within the Qumran Sect, within Rabbinic Judaism, and within Primitive Christianity*, trans. Pearl Sjolander, (CBNTS, 5, Lund: Gleerup, 1972), 16-28.

<sup>81</sup> See also, Forkman, 1972, 70-86.

sexual offences (1QS 7.12-14; CD 7.1f; 4.17, 20; 5.7-11; 8.5-7; 12.1f), social offences (1QS 4.2-6; CD 6.20-7.1; cf. Lev. 19.18; Ezek. 16.49), ritual offences (1QS 5.10, 5.13ff; CD 12.6-11,12-20), and disciplinary offences (1QS 6.24-7.25; 7.1; 7.16f., 7.22, 25) were expelled from the community.<sup>82</sup> Re-admittance was possible but deferred according to the transgression that each member committed.

On the other hand, Judaism attracted non-Jews and admitted converts to its community. It is interesting to see the inclusion of other ethnic groups from different cultural and religious backgrounds to Judaism through various methods and missionary activities. In this section particular attention is paid to the questions of how other ethnic groups crossed their ethnic boundaries and became assimilated to the Jewish community; and, how the new ethnic community, after admitting the non-Jews, maintained their group cohesion in the new covenant community of Judaism. Furthermore, did the Jews give full assimilation to the non-Jewish converts and treat them as fully equal to themselves? In short, the focus of this section is to investigate the community life of the Jewish group which included Gentile converts from an ethnic perspective.

If we define Judaism by covenantal nomism, then we are also defining it by reference to the Mosaic Law and the emphasis upon God's covenant with Abraham. According to Scripture, the name of Abraham is given by God (Gen. 17.4) and represents the father of many nations in whom and through whom all the nations will be blessed (Gen. 12.3). This indicates the motif of mission to the nations. Again, Genesis chapter 17 repeatedly mentions that anyone who complies with the covenantal Law is to be counted as the seed of Abraham (Gen. 17.7-10). It is

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<sup>82</sup> See also Forkman, 1972, 39-47.



affirmed by the circumcision of the household of Abraham, whether they were physical children of Abraham, or bought by him with money from a foreigner (i.e. those who were not his offspring biologically), or a slave in from the household (Gen. 17.12). According to Jubilees the sharp formulation of Israel's distinctiveness begins with the circumcision of Abraham (*Jubilees* 15.23-32);<sup>83</sup> very soon it was extended to other ethnic origins within the house of Abraham (Gen. 17.12 cited above) by obligation according to the covenant and marked by circumcision. This suggests the cross-cultural mission motif inclusive of different ethnic origins within the house of Abraham which we have noted. Thus we can assume that Judaism could be interpreted as a cross-ethnic missionary religion at a very early stage within the household of Abraham, the one who was perceived as the founder of the nation of Israel.

The mission of the Jews then was significantly an explanation of monotheism, high standard of moral and spiritual life, and national privilege. It is seen also in Philo's welcoming attitude towards the Gentile converts,

Those who previously had ascribed the honours due to God to those who were no gods, but now embrace the creed of one instead of a multiplicity of sovereigns, must be held to be our dearest friends and closest kinsmen. It is their godliness of heart which leads up to friendship and affinity and therefore Jews must rejoice with them, as if, though blind at first they had recovered their sight and had come from deepest darkness to behold the most radiant light (*De Virt* 179).<sup>84</sup>

Philo also says that anyone who abandons pagan worship and their own kin but follows the instruction of the Law should be warmly and generously accepted into

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<sup>83</sup> See also Riches, 2000, 27.

<sup>84</sup> See also Riches, 2000, 46.

the Jewish ethnic community (*Spec Leg* 1.51; 4.174; *De Virt* 102- 8; 212-19).<sup>85</sup> We do not know the number of Gentile converts but our sources prove that many Gentiles were converted. Esther 8.17 LXX has a record that many Gentiles were circumcised and judaized for fear of the Jews. Theodotus in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.22.5 has the account that Jacob would not give Dinah to the son of Hamor 'until all the inhabitants of Shechem were circumcised and judaized'. Josephus tells that Metilius, commander of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem, saved his life by entreaties and promises to judaize and even to be circumcised (*J.W.* 2.454); also Izates, king of Adiabene, having been converted by a Jewish merchant without circumcision being required, was later persuaded that circumcision was essential (Josephus, *Ant* 20.38-46).<sup>86</sup> Josephus describes converts as those who choose to live and join the Jewish community by converting to the ancestral custom and practices distinctive of the Jewish nation (*J.W.* 2.17, 18; 462-63).<sup>87</sup>

From our sources we learn that there are two crucial features of conversion, one being by attraction and one by fear. Many of the God-fearers were impressed by the antiquity of Judaism, its strict monotheism, its high standard of moral character as seen in the Hebrew Scriptures and exemplified by many of the devout Jews.<sup>88</sup> They were categorized as proselytes, God-fearers, or sympathetic supporters of Judaism who participated in synagogues and followed certain Jewish customs but were not fully converted to Judaism.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> See also Riches, 2000, 46.

<sup>86</sup> See also, Dunn, 1993, 15, n.1.

<sup>87</sup> See also J.D.G Dunn, *JSNT* 18 (1983) 26-27.

<sup>88</sup> L. H. Feldmann analyses interestingly the attractiveness of Judaism. See Feldmann, 1993, 177-287.

<sup>89</sup> A.T. Kraabel argues that such Gentile sympathisers were not found in the ancient world, see Kraabel, *Numen* 28 (1981), 113-26. But Kraabel's view has been convincingly refuted by scholars. See Finn, *CBQ* 47 (1985), 75-84; also J. J. Collins, 'A Symbol of Otherness: Circumcision and

Gentile God-fearers appear frequently in the book of Acts (10.2, 22, 35, 13.16, 26, 43, 50; 18.7) and the writings of Josephus provide evidence that many Gentiles adopted Jewish customs and laws (*C Ap* 2.11, 40; *J.W.* 2.20; 13.7, 33; *Ant* 3.8, 9; 20.8, 11, cf. also 14.72)<sup>90</sup> and of the participation of Gentile God-fearers in the life of Jewish covenantal community, (Josephus, *J.W.* 4.262, 324; 5.15, 17-18; 5.362-3; *Ant* 3.217; *C Ap* 2.123; 2.280-86, 293; 11.84-87). Josephus says also that if foreign male rulers wished to marry into the Herodian family, they were required to become Jews by circumcision (*Ant* 20.7, 13; cf. 16.75). He also speaks of the conversion of Metilius, and Izates (already cited above), the willingness of Izates to be circumcised reinforces that circumcision is required for full incorporation into Jewish community. In parallel with the Pauline presentation Josephus describes how in Antioch many Greeks were attracted to Judaism and were incorporated in some measure (*J.W.* 7.43-45). In Syria too there appeared to be some Judaizers (*J.W.* 2.461). Converts were not always by attraction as we have noted, on some occasions people joined the Jewish community out of fear (Josephus, *Ant* 11.285). The book of Judith (14.10) contains the story of Achior who believed in the God of Israel, so he was circumcised and admitted to the Jewish community.<sup>91</sup> It is impossible to estimate the number of the non-Jewish converts, but our sources clearly and adequately state that a number of non-Jews were converted to Judaism and assimilated to the Jewish community.

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Salvation in First Century', in J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs eds., *To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, Others in the Late Antiquity*, (Chicago: Scholars Press, 1985), 163-86, especially 179-85.

<sup>90</sup> See also Feldmann, 1993, 344-8.

<sup>91</sup> See also Sim, 1996, 171-95.

In addition to our primary sources we also have supportive viewpoints of modern scholars to the universality of Judaism or judaizing of the Jews. K.T. Kuhn comments that in the Jewish Diaspora there was “a lively Jewish mission” G.F. Moore also sees that “the belief in the future universality of the true religion ...led to efforts to convert the Gentiles, and made Judaism the first great missionary religion of the Mediterranean World.”<sup>92</sup> J. Jeremias’ conclusion is supposed to be an assured result and convincing as he says, “At the time of Jesus’ appearance an unparalleled period of missionary activity was in progress in Israel” and “Jesus thus came upon the scene in the midst of what was par excellence the missionary age of Jewish history...Jesus grew up in the midst of a people actively engaged, both by the spoken and written word, in a Gentile world.”<sup>93</sup> Jeremias ends up his comment on the mission of the Jews to the Gentiles by saying that Jesus and Judaism looked to God and the future for the conversion of Gentiles.<sup>94</sup> There is no doubt that these scholars have a consensus on the universalism/inclusiveness of Judaism in the first century CE.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Admission of non-Jewish converts into the Jewish community points to the fact that a new sense of kinship emerged in Judaism, and that new kinship is not purely fictive kinship nor consanguinity but built upon repentance of heart and commitment to the covenant Law. This new kinship became the new people of God, they are the new Jewish ethnic group, predominantly Jewish by birth but also

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<sup>92</sup> See Kuhn, ‘Proselytes’, *TWNT* 6.731, 1.5; also S. McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 3. See G. F. Moore, ‘Fate and Free Will in the Jewish Philosophies According to Josephus’. *HTR* 22 (1929), 371-89.

<sup>93</sup> See J. Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise to the Nations*, (London: SCM Press, 1958), 11, 12, 17.

<sup>94</sup> Jeremias, 1958, 55-73.

including people of other cultures identifying with the covenant mixed of multicultural peoples in one agreement of the covenant emerging within Judaism. Circumcision was the hallmark of their ethnic group identity; and circumcision was required both for those who were biological descendants of Abraham and for those who assimilated into the Jewish community by virtue of conversion.

The new converts crossed their ethnic boundary by abandoning pagan worship and life, custom and belief, and submitting themselves to the God of Israel. This was done in accordance with all the covenant requirements of the law essentially marked by circumcision as the sign of their conversion and new membership of Israel. The question of whether the converts were accepted with full assimilation in the Jewish community and treated equally with the Jews by birth is still an open question and a challenging one. Riches sees that 'there is finally a sense that, however much the proselytes may be treated as members of the Jewish group, there remain differences'.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Riches, 2000, 48.

## Chapter Three

### **THE CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW: DATE, LOCATION, AUTHORSHIP IN RELATION TO THE AUTHOR'S ETHNIC IDENTITY**

#### **3.1 Dating the Composition of the Gospel**

Different dates have been given by scholars in regard to the time of composition, but the major dispute is to whether place the Gospel before or after 70 CE, that is, before or after the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. Scholars have also tried to give the exact date, or the nearest, or the most probable date of the Gospel and Matthean specialists have made different conclusions. First of all, we shall deal with the major issue of whether the Matthean Gospel was written before or after the terrible events of 70 CE, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, with a view to its use in our analysis of the Matthean community from an ethnic perspective. We will also examine our sources and evidence for dating the Gospel at the best time for use in our sociological analysis of the Gospel. In particular, attention will be given to the question whether it was written before or after the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. The events of 70 CE had serious political and religious consequences for Jews. After 70 CE the Jews lost their political power and Palestine was no longer under their control but the Romans. When the Jews lost their political power in 70 CE different political movements took place in order to regain power which affected their ethnicity. The Jews struggled as an ethnic group under the pressure of the Romans in order to regain power and there was also a change in Judaism from Temple-centred religion to community-centred religion; and the

emergence of different groups such as Christian Jews, Pauline law-free Gospel in parallel to formative Judaism also affected Jewish ethnicity. Therefore, it will be essential to examine the date of the Gospel whether it was before or after the 70 CE events.

### 3.1.1 *A Date Prior to 70 CE.*

There are a number of scholars who posit a date prior to the Jewish war. The main argument for this theory is that a good deal of the Gospel seems to suggest that the Gospel was written while the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were still standing and in full operation.<sup>1</sup> This argument is based on the evangelist's emphasis on both the temple cult (5.23-24; 9.13; 12.5-7; 17.24-27; 23.16-22) and the Sadducees (3.7; 16.1, 6, 11-12; 22.23, 24). For these writers the Gospel was composed while the Temple was still fully functioning and the Sadducees were still a politico-religious force.

Sim argues<sup>2</sup> by presenting two convincing facts. Firstly, it is quite possible that Matthew merely used earlier material which was at his disposal for the purpose of presenting the Gospel to his congregation with events of the recent past included so that the readers might understand better. It is not necessary nor logical to assume an earlier date from the existence of earlier documents within the text. Instead, we must look for the latest stratum in the text for dating the Gospel; for instance, Mt. 22.7

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<sup>1</sup> R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1994), 602-6. R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1989), 88-90. D. Hagner, *Matthew: 2 vols. WBC 33A and 33B*; (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 1995, Lxxiv. J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, (London: SCM Press, 1976), 104-5. See also David Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998) 35-6. This reference is to Sim's work and not his viewpoint. Sim vigorously argues for post 70; his works will be referred to frequently in the following.

<sup>2</sup> Sim 1998, 36.

which most likely speaks of the latest event in the whole document. If we were to make a principle of dating earlier by looking at the presence of earlier incidents, we would be tempted to date some of Pauline epistles wrongly to the lifetime of Jesus on the basis that Paul occasionally cites authentic sayings of Jesus (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.10). Secondly, even if we assume that some of the materials were redactional and not traditional, it could be that Matthew was historizing or aiming for versimilitude in his narrative. In all cases we need to remember that Matthew was writing his Gospel for the practical needs of his community, and narrated the stories which had a set historical context in the pre-70CE period and sought to make them believable to his readers. In all probability, then, Matthew's congregation had a good knowledge of pre-70 Judaism, including the Temple cult and the role of the Sadducees. France, one of the supporters of the pre-70 composition hypothesis, admits that these arguments in favour of an earlier date are hardly conclusive.<sup>3</sup>

The most difficult task for those who are in favour of pre-70 is how to interpret and where to place the text of 22.1-10 which seems most likely to refer to the 70 events, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. If Matthew wrote his Gospel prior to those terrible events, then Matthew's redactional insertion of v. 7 must be explained on grounds other than retrospectivity. Gundry defends this by relating the text (22.1-10) to Isa. 5.24-25, and states that this passage does not refer to the fate of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans, but is an allusion to Isa. 5.24-25 which speaks of God's judgement against his people, Israel.<sup>4</sup> Gundry states that the first two invitations in the parable refer to the Old Testament prophets, and the

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<sup>3</sup> France, 1989, 90.

<sup>4</sup> Gundry, 1994, 436.



burning of the city demonstrates God's judgement on his people and the third call points to the mission of the Church to all nations at the post-resurrection period <sup>5</sup> Gundry identifies the king in v. 7 with Caesar, who ordered the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. But it is not in tune with the rest of the parable. In all the remainder of the parable the king is obviously God.<sup>6</sup>

Gundry further argues that the usual interpretation of the passage (22.1-10) as post-70 conflicts with other aspects of Matthean theology. He maintains that if v. 7 represents the 70 events, then the invitation to the Gentiles in the following verses would mean that the Gentile mission was commanded only after the Jewish war, and such a reading would contradict the conclusion of the Gospel, the so-called Great Commission, which was pronounced at the time of resurrection.<sup>7</sup> The third invitation in the parable of the wedding feast (22.1-10) and other Matthean missiological teachings should not contradict each other. The central theme of the invitations in the parable is to demonstrate God's call for mission to which Israel and her leaders fail to respond. It is most likely that in Matthew's viewpoint the mandate for mission to the nations was in fact already given at the time of resurrection, but Israel still failed in her response until the time of the Gospel's composition in the period post 70.

Sim argues<sup>8</sup> against Gundry's analysis by presenting the following arguments. First of all, his assertion that Matthew composed 22.7 on the basis of Isa. 5.24-25 is uncertain. The two passages are not close in their contents. Even if it is to be accepted, then it needs to be explained why the evangelist considered this Isaianic

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<sup>5</sup> Gundry, 1994, 437. See also Sim, 1998, 36-37.

<sup>6</sup> Sim, 1998, 37.

<sup>7</sup> Gundry, 1994, 436-7, 600. See also Sim, 1998, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Sim, 1998, 37-9.

passage as appropriate to the parable of the wedding feast in the first place. If the Isaianic text is alluded to in 22.7, it is more probable that Matthew used it in the light of the incidents of 70 as proof of the fulfilment of the prophetic saying rather than in ignorance of it.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, if we claim the king in v. 7 as Caesar, there is no agreement with the remainder of the parable; instead the king here in v. 7 represents God as it does in the whole of the parable. The Hebrew Scriptures clearly state that God is the Lord of history and he often uses unwitting foreign powers to judge and punish his people. God raised the Babylonians and the Syrians to destroy the kingdoms of Israel and Judah as an act of divine judgement on his people. This means that the king in v. 7 which Gundry believes to be Caesar is not merely an earthly king but God himself, and he (God) uses these kings of nations as instruments to execute his divine punishment or discipline for his people.

Some scholars interpret this parable (22.1-10) in terms of the closing of mission to Israel and the beginning of mission to the Gentiles which seems to contradict other aspects of Matthean missiological teachings. It would be contrary to many other pieces of evidence to suggest that the mission to the Jews came to an end with the events of 70CE; rather the indication is that it will continue until the parousia.<sup>10</sup> W. D. Davies, D. C. Allison, and Sim have the same opinion that the simplest way to solve this issue is to admit that Matthew might have not been absolutely consistent in his presentation.<sup>11</sup> As I have stated above, it is probable that the evangelist knew the fact that mission to the nations was given as early as the

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<sup>9</sup> Meier, 1983, 16, No. 24. Meier questions why Matthew took the trouble of inserting this separate narrative into a parable in which it does not fit. The simplest explanation, according to Meier, is to read that it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. See also Sim, 1998, 37.

<sup>10</sup> See for detail discussion, Sim, 1998, 109-164.

time of resurrection, but Israel repeatedly failed to respond to her mission even until the time of the 70 events. It is therefore, probable that what the evangelist is trying to demonstrate is not the beginning of the Gentile mission but a renewed or more vigorous mission after the Jewish war.<sup>12</sup> Another possible solution to this issue is to take the third invitation not as a reference to Gentile mission but as an allusion to a third Jewish mission.<sup>13</sup>

Sim argues further that the parable of Mt. 22.1-10 is the continuation of the parable of the vineyard that precedes it (Mt. 21.33-46).<sup>14</sup> In that parable the evangelist gives the story of a householder who sent two teams of his servants to his tenants. The tenants subsequently mistreat the servants and so the householder sent his own son who was murdered by the tenants. In this parable the householder's servants symbolise the Old Testament prophets and the murdered son represents Jesus the son of God. The vineyard parable illustrates that the story of the wickedness and disobedience of Israel's leaders continued into the Christian era, which is then shown in the following parable of the wedding feast. Matthew used the second parable to incorporate the failure of the Jewish mission, and it fits with the events of 70CE. This interpretation is more likely to be the intention of the evangelist than Gundry's interpretation. If this argument is correct, then the second parable fundamentally continues the point of the first parable, all of which is pointing to the 70 incident, and we may, then, conclude that the pre-70 dating of the Gospel is an improbability.

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<sup>11</sup> W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew 2 vols.*, ICC, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988, 1991), 1, 130 also Sim, 1998, 38.

<sup>12</sup> Compare with Sim's alternative interpretation, Sim 1998, 38.

<sup>13</sup> Sim, 1998, 38. Sim discusses the possibility of it in chapter six of this volume.

### 3.1.2 *A Date after 70 CE*

It is clear that the evangelist had a parable which includes the destruction of a city. Robinson quotes 2 *Bar.* 7.1, which tells us that the Temple was burnt and the walls were thrown down. From this text Robinson argues that Matthew's narrative is not an accurate record of the 70 events. He maintains that an authentic *ex eventu* prophecy of the 70 events is seen in *Sib. Or.* 4.125-7.<sup>15</sup> Sim<sup>16</sup> and France<sup>17</sup> argue against Robinson's view by quoting Josephus (*J.W.* 6.230-5, 250-66, 271-84) that much of Jerusalem was burnt down and severely destroyed. Josephus' statement reinforces the probability of a link between the interpretation of the text at 22.1-10 and the historical events of 70. It is more and more unlikely that Matthew's description of the destruction of a city in the parable was pre-70. In history, there is no such severe destruction that had taken place in the recent past by the time of the evangelist. We might ask whether the first readers of the Gospel would have understood if it were pre-70.<sup>18</sup> It is, therefore, most probable that the evangelist is describing the historical incidents of 70 where the city of Jerusalem was burnt down, the Temple was completely destroyed, and many Jews were killed. Moreover, Gundry's view, a pre-70 position, would seem to lend some strength to a post-70 position, in that, he believes Matthew was not prophesying but describing the historical events by citing the Old Testament as its fulfilment. It reinforces rather the possibility of post-70. These facts, with particular reference to 22.7 in light of the

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<sup>14</sup> Sim, 1998, 38-9.

<sup>15</sup> Robinson, 1976, 20-1.

<sup>16</sup> Sim, 1998, 39.

<sup>17</sup> France, 1989, 84, n. 8.

failure of the Jewish mission and the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, confirm the consensus that Matthew wrote his Gospel after the terrible historical events of 70.

Most Matthean scholars hold the view that Matthew composed his Gospel after the events of 70 CE.<sup>19</sup> This hypothesis is strongly supported by the consensus of Matthew's dependence on Mark.<sup>20</sup> The idea of Marcan priority holds the view that when Matthew began to write his Gospel he collected his sources – Mark, the Q source (a collection of Jesus' sayings), and M (the special Matthean source). Each had its own tradition and they were woven together both in oral and written stages.<sup>21</sup> Then Matthew composed and edited his Gospel for his community. Most scholars agree that Mark was written during or shortly after the Jewish war of 66-70 CE. One exception to this is M. Hengel who makes a strong case for the hypothesis that Mark was written in the year 69 CE, just before the events of 70.<sup>22</sup> Although scholars like R. Pesch believe that Mk. 13.14 speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem,<sup>23</sup> we do not have adequate evidence to support the view that Marcan composition took place after the 70 events. It seems more probable to date the Marcan Gospel prior to the 70 incidents. In any case, dating of Mark around this period would place the Matthean

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<sup>18</sup> Sim, 1998, 39.

<sup>19</sup> Notably P. Bonnard, S. Brandon, R. E. Brown, W. D. Davies, M. Goulder, W. Grundmann, J. Kingsbury, W. G. Kümmel, N. Perrin, K. L. Schmidt, E. Schweizer, G. Strecker, J. P. Meier, D. Sim, and others see Sim, 1998, 33-39 and literature cited there.

<sup>20</sup> Of course Marcan priority has been attacked notably by W. Farmer, 'The Synoptic Problem: Modern Developments of Griesbach's Hypothesis,' *NTS* 23 (1976-77) 275-95. However, the theory of Marcan priority still stands as the consensus.

<sup>21</sup> Meier, 1983, 15-6.

<sup>22</sup> M. Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, (London: SCM Press, 1985), 7-28.

<sup>23</sup> R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2vols.; *HTKNT*; Freiburg: Herder, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 1980), II, 14, 291-2. See also Sim, 1998, 34, n. 8.

Gospel, which is dependent on Mark, in the post- 70 period.<sup>24</sup> This is re-affirmed by the text ( Mt. 22.1-10). Mark does not have this wedding parable which is entirely Matthean redactional work.

Meier argues for a late date for Matthew's Gospel by analysing the so-called "delay of the parousia." The first Christian generation awaited the imminent second coming of the Lord in heavens. Matthew asserts the realized eschatology which emphasises the presence of the risen Lord in his church now and in the indefinite future (28.18-20). For Meier the Matthean theme-songs of delay are important. For instance, in Mt. 24.48 the wicked servant thinks his master is delaying; in 25.5 the bridegroom is delaying; and in 25.19 the master comes after a long time.<sup>25</sup> Sim disagrees with the argument of Meier in this issue and argues that these texts (24.48; 25.5; 25.19) do not necessarily speak for a late date. Christians in the 50s CE and 60s could also have said much the same thing.<sup>26</sup> It is important to give this point due consideration. In the study of Pauline epistles we use the Pauline development of thought as a criterion for earlier or later dates for the epistles. Similarly, some scholars attempt to support the late date for Matthew's Gospel by analysing the developed Christology and ecclesiology as evidence.<sup>27</sup> France denies that this kind of evolutionary argument would necessitate dating the Pauline epistles after the composition of the Christian apocalypse<sup>28</sup> and Sim agrees.<sup>29</sup> I would like to argue that one has to think in terms of authorship and purpose. If one author writes a

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<sup>24</sup> Hagner argues that nothing prevents the possibility that Matthew was written only a year or two later than Mark, see Hagner, 1993, lxxiv. Hagner's argument is not impossible, but it is more likely that a longer period was necessary for the evangelist to compose a Gospel in the actual sense.

<sup>25</sup> Meier, 1983, 17.

<sup>26</sup> Sim, 1998, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Sim, 1998, 35.

<sup>28</sup> France, 1989, 87.

number of letters or Gospels, and if development of thought occurs in that same person's work, we can give an opinion on the dating on the basis of the investigation of language and thought. Having seen a more developed theological presentation in the Pauline letters than in the apocalypse, does not necessarily mean the Pauline epistles are later than the apocalypse. In this kind of issue we have to look at the relationship between different texts, especially when there is a dependence of one work upon another by a different author. In the case of Matthew's Gospel, it is important to note that Matthew depends much on Mark and utilises much of the Marcan version, but the delay of the parousia and a developed ecclesiology and Christology are clearly Matthean. Therefore, those Matthean themes of ecclesiology, eschatology, and Christology support the late date as they are more developed and better established in Matthew than in Mark. To list the main argument of the points once again: (1) with Paul - more developed theology, ecclesiology, eschatology means later date, (2) with Matthew, is it necessarily the same? (3) Matthew's developed view of the church and the parousia would imply a later date than the Pauline Epistles. (4) Matthew's use of Mark would clearly imply a date later than Mark. (5) Difficulties between Jews and Gentiles only hinted and more developed concerns for Matthew's community—implying later date. Finally, even if those elements are not convincing enough, Sim is right in making a conclusive statement that the two primary arguments in favour of a date post the Jewish war, Matthew's dependence on Mark and particularly the evidence of Mt. 22.1-10, are conclusive enough to stand on their own.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Sim, 1998, 35.

<sup>30</sup> Sim, 1998, 35.

### 3.1.3 *A Date prior to 100 CE*

To date Matthew prior to 100 CE is evidenced by the probability that Ignatius of Antioch was well acquainted with the written Gospel. Ignatius died c. 107.<sup>31</sup> Ignatius wrote a number of epistles during his journey to Rome to face his martyrdom. Those epistles contain a number of clear references to Matthew's Gospel.<sup>32</sup> E. Massaux did a critical study of the influence of Matthew on early patristic writings and claimed that the letters of Ignatius contain no less than nine certain and five probable allusions to the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>33</sup>

H. Köster attacks Massaux's hypothesis and argues that there is no conclusive evidence which points to a literary relationship between the epistles of Ignatius and the Gospel of Matthew. Köster sees that they both had parallel oral traditions and the authors wrote according to their own priorities.<sup>34</sup> Köster's argument was developed by J. Smit Sibinga and he further argues that the closest parallels between Ignatius and Matthew are seen in the M material (Matthew's special source). So he maintains that Ignatius knew only the special source of Matthew and not the written Gospel.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand Sim argues that Massaux has overstated his case and it is clear that

<sup>31</sup> Meier states that Ignatius died no later than 117CE, see Meier, 1983, 17; also see C. Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia SBEC 29*, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1992), 3-9 discussed thoroughly and concluded that Ignatius died c. 107 which is more precise and convincing than Meier's statement.

<sup>32</sup> For detailed discussion, see Sim, 1998, 257-287.

<sup>33</sup> E. Massaux, *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Ignatius*, edited with an introduction by A. J. Bellinzoni, 3 vols., NGS 5, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), 1, 85-94. As the nine certain Matthean texts Massaux lists the following : Eph. 5.2/Mt. 18.19-20; Eph. 14.2/Mt. 12.23; Mag. 8.2/Mt. 5.11-12; Trall. 11.1/Mt. 15.13; Philad. 2.2/Mt. 7.15; Philad. 3.1/Mt. 15.13; Smyrn. 1.1/Mt. 3.15; Pol. 1.2-3/Mt. 8.17; Pol. 2.2/Mt. 10.16; and as the probable references he lists Eph. 17.1/Mt. 26.7; Mag. 9.2/Mt. 27.52; Rom. 9.3/Mt. 10.40-41; Philad. 6.1/Mt. 23.27; Smyrn. 6.1/Mt. 19.12. See also Sim, 1998, 31, n. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Sim, 1998, 32, n. 3. See also H. Köster, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern*, TU 65, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957), 24-61. Köster is followed by W. R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, (Hermeneia: Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 9. See also Sim, 1998, 32, n. 3.



in some works Ignatius reproduced the text of the Gospel, not merely the source. The best example is seen in Mt. 3.15 which passage occurred in *Smyrn* 1.1. In the Matthean version Jesus persuaded John the Baptist to baptise him, 'for it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness'. These words appear only in Matthew and in comparison with the Marcan version, it clearly appears that they are a Matthean insertion. The language is also patently Matthean. When we compare these editorial works of Matthew with the statement of Ignatius that 'Jesus was baptised by John so that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him'; although Ignatius did not exactly cite the Gospel text, it is clear that his words are certainly dependent on Matthew's written Gospel. Ignatius' text, based upon a Matthean redactional insertion, confirms the fact that Ignatius knew the Gospel in written form.<sup>36</sup> W.-D. Köhler investigates this issue and sees two probable cases and nine quite possible instances on which Ignatius texts depend on the Gospel.<sup>37</sup> The majority of Matthean specialists agree with Massaux's conclusion in general that there is a literary relationship between the epistles of Ignatius and the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>38</sup>

Our sources and evidence seem to be adequate to give a date within the last quarter of the first century CE. That is to say, there is sufficient evidence to date the Gospel between the historical destruction of Jerusalem in 70 and the death of Ignatius of Antioch c. 107 CE. D. Hare makes a study of Jewish persecution of the Christians

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<sup>35</sup> J. Smit Sibinga, 'Ignatius and Matthew', *NovT* 8 (1966), 263-83. Sibinga's argument is supported by Trevett, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 22-23, and 'Approaching Matthew from the Second Century: The Under-Used Ignatian Correspondence', *JSNT* 20 (1984), 59-67.

<sup>36</sup> Sim, 1998, 32.

<sup>37</sup> Köhler's probable references are *Smyrn* 1.1/ Mt. 3.15; *Philad* 3.1/ Mt. 15.13, the nine quite probable cases are *Eph* 5.2/ Mt. 18.19-20; *Eph* 15.1/ Mt. 23.8; *Eph* 17.1/ Mt. 26.6-13; *Eph* 19/ Mt. 2.2, 9; *Philad* 2.2/ Mt. 7.15; *Philad* 6.1/ Mt. 23.27; *Pol* 1.2-3/ Mt. 8.17; *Pol* 2.2/ Mt. 10.16; *Smyrn* 6.1/ Mt. 19.12. See W.-Köhler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums in der Zeit vor Irenäus*, (WUNT 24; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1987, 77-88. Also in Sim, 1998, 33, n. 6.

in which he believes that only around or after 85 CE do we get clear references in Jewish and Christian literature which indicate the break of the Christians with the synagogue.<sup>39</sup> If Hare's conclusion is correct, and we allow ourselves to assume that the Matthean community had departed<sup>40</sup> from their parental Jewish community and Judaism, it is then very likely that Matthew wrote his Gospel after 85 CE but before 107, the death of Ignatius. In our sociological analysis of the Gospel of Matthew for this project we will place the Gospel between 70 and 100 CE, during the era of the second Christian generation most probably between 85 – 90 CE.

### 3.2 Locating the Gospel of Matthew

As dating of the Gospel is important for our sociological analysis of the Gospel, so locating the Gospel is not only important but essential for investigating the 'Life-Setting' of the Matthean community. It is always difficult to give a definite answer to the question of location, but despite this fact, we will examine our evidence and try to come to a conclusion which would assist our sociological analysis of the Gospel from an ethnic perspective.

Different locations have been suggested by scholars. M. Albrecht proposed Jerusalem to be the origin of the Gospel.<sup>41</sup> However, our conclusion for dating the

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<sup>38</sup> Meier, 1983, 24-5, and literature cited there; Davies, and Allison, 1988, 130.

<sup>39</sup> D. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 56, 105, 127, 146-66. See also Meier, 1983, 16.

<sup>40</sup> It is only for those who posit that Matthean community had parted from their parental Judaism. Certainly there are many scholars who hold the view that the Matthean community had not parted from their Jewish community. This issue will be discussed in the following chapter; however, whether the Matthean community had already parted from the parent Jewish community or not, the probability of dating the Gospel between 70 CE and 107 CE is still valid.

<sup>41</sup> See Meier, 1983, 18, n. 31. See M. Albrecht, *Die Botschaft des Neuen Testaments. 1/1 Die Entstehung der Botschaft. Die Entstehung des Evangeliums*, (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1947), 223.

Gospel after 70 prevents the possibility of Jerusalem. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple caused serious disruption on the Jews and Jewish-Christian communities<sup>42</sup> and the Jewish-Christians had probably moved out from Jerusalem seeking shelter. The use of Greek in writing the Gospel also suggests the unlikelihood of Jerusalem. It is reasonable to assume that the author wrote his Gospel in the language of the common and ordinary people of his community. In this regard J. A. Fitzmyer conclusively argues that Aramaic was the most commonly used language in Palestine in the first century CE though both Greek and Hebrew were used at the same time.<sup>43</sup> If Fitzmeyer's argument is correct, then the Gospel of Matthew was most likely not composed in Jerusalem.

Brandon argues for Alexandria.<sup>44</sup> But we have no reliable evidence to prove the existence and growth of the Christian church in Alexandria, the capital of Egypt, during the first century CE. This suggestion, consequently has not been well supported by Matthean scholarship. B. Viviano suggests Caesarea Maritima in Judea.<sup>45</sup> This is hard to believe because Josephus recorded a massacre of Jews in Caesarea Maritima in CE. 66 and the surviving Jews fled from Caesarea (*J.W.* 2.13.7; 226-270; and 2.14.4-5; 284-292; and *Ant* 20.8. 7, 9; 173-178). According to Josephus almost the entire Jewish population of Caesarea, some 20,000 in number,

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<sup>42</sup> Brandon and Meier express the same argument. See S. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and Christian Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, (London: SPCK, 1957); and Meier, 1983, 18.

<sup>43</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, 'The Languages of Palestine in the First Century AD,' *A Wandering Aramean*, (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979), 29-56. M. Hengel and S. Freyne argue that Greek was widely used in Palestine during the Hellenistic period which leads Hengel to believe that Matthew's Gospel might have been written in Jerusalem or somewhere in Palestine. See M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 2 vols., (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974); especially Vol. I, 58-65. Also see S. Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian*, (Wilmington: Glazier, 1980), 139-45. However, the wide use of Greek did not substitute the most common use of Aramaic in Jerusalem and in Palestine in the First Century CE.

<sup>44</sup> Brandon, 1957, 221, 226, 232, 242-43. See also Meier, 1983, 19, n. 39.

was butchered and after the first Revolt there seem to be very few Jews in the city of Caesarea.<sup>46</sup> Our historical evidence supports the unlikelihood of Caesarea Maritima being the birthplace of the Gospel.

Another group of scholars places the Gospel in the North Syrian district;<sup>47</sup> some other scholars propose farther south, the border area between Syria and Palestine.<sup>48</sup> Goulder proposes that Matthew's Gospel was written by a 'humble provincial copyist-school-master' in some town of Syria.<sup>49</sup> These suppositions encounter the same problem as the proposal of Jerusalem. The Greek language was not overall common to the ordinary people in the country of Palestine by the time the Gospel was composed, that is, the late first century CE. Goulder's suggestion for a town in Syria has a difficulty that, if B. Metzger's argument is correct, in all of the cities, apart from Antioch, Syriac was spoken.<sup>50</sup>

Kennard suggests Edessa as one of the possible cities of composition.<sup>51</sup> Meier vigorously argues that Christian literature in Edessa always used Aramaic or Syriac. Almost all literature of the first three centuries in Edessa was written in Syriac. And the earliest literature was documented and preserved in Christian Syriac in the city of

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<sup>45</sup> B. T. Viviano, 'Where Was the Gospel according to Matthew Written?' *CBQ* 41(1979), 533-46. See also Meier, 1983, 20, n. 40.

<sup>46</sup> G. Foerster, 'The Early History of Caesarea,' *The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima. Vol. I. Studies in the History of Caesarea Maritima*, (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975), 9-22. See also Meier, 1983, 20, n. 40.

<sup>47</sup> J. Kennard, 'The Place of Origin of Matthew's Gospel,' *ATR* 31 (1949), 243-46.

<sup>48</sup> Meier, 1983, 20; see also, W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Berlin: Evangelischer Verlagsanstalt, 1972, 43; also E. Käsemann, 'Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie,' *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 2.82-104.

<sup>49</sup> M. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew*, London: SPCK, 1974, 9, 11, 13. Also Meier, 1983, 20.

<sup>50</sup> B. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 5. See also K. Prümm, *Religionsgeschichtliches Handbuch*, (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1954), 653-54; R. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949, 96; H. Bietenhard, 'Die syrische Dekapolis von Pompeius bis Traian,' in *ANRW* 2.8, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), 220-61; Meier, 1983, 20-21.

Edessa; even pre-Christian literature was also written in Syriac.<sup>52</sup> We have already argued that the cities in the countryside of Syria would be an unlikely location for the Gospel's production as this use of different languages tends to show.

G. Kilpatrick suggests the possibility of a commercial city such as Berytus, Tyre, or Sidon.<sup>53</sup> Meier's argument seems to be right on this issue when he states that the church that produced this Gospel, which was a most influential Gospel book in the second century,<sup>54</sup> must be a church that was influential in its time and capable of composing a well structured Gospel.<sup>55</sup> The cities like Berytus, Tyre, or Sidon have no evidence to argue that Christians in those cities were in the position to produce a Gospel. Tyre (Acts 21. 3-7) and Sidon (Acts 27.3) occur once and the New Testament knows very little about them. Berytus is not mentioned at all in the New Testament. Kilpatrick's suggestion, then, is not persuasive.

The consensus of scholars for the location of Matthew's Gospel is Antioch, the capital city of Syria. Antioch was the centre of Hellenistic learning and the Greek language, and a predominantly Greek-speaking metropolis.<sup>56</sup> At the same time it had a very large Jewish population: M. Stern and Meier think that it probably had the largest Jewish population in the whole of Syria.<sup>57</sup> The New Testament speaks of Antioch as one of the first Christian churches outside of Palestine at an early date,

<sup>51</sup> Kennard, 1949, 245.

<sup>52</sup> Meier, 1983, 21. For Old Syriac inscriptions Meier quotes Fitzmyer, 1979, 83, n. 108; H. Drijvers, 'Hatra, Palmyra und Edessa,' in *ANRW* 2.8, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), 799-906.

<sup>53</sup> G. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, (Oxford: University Press, 1946), 133-34. E. Blair suggests either Syria or Phoenicia, see E. Blair, *Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*, (New York: Abingdon: 1960), 43.

<sup>54</sup> Massaux, 1990, states that the second century Fathers most often quote or allude Matthew's Gospel.

<sup>55</sup> Meier, 1983, 22.

<sup>56</sup> See Meier, 1983, 21-22.

<sup>57</sup> M. Stern, 'The Jewish Diaspora,' in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, S. Safrai and M. Stern eds., *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 1. 138; Meier, 1983, 22.

probably in the 30s. It was probably founded by Jewish Christians of the law-free Hellenistic group.<sup>58</sup>

Meier constructs his argument for Antioch as follows.<sup>59</sup> The church of Antioch was probably founded by the circumcision-free mission but very soon it fell under the influence of the more legalistic Jamesian (James party) party from Jerusalem. However, before the time of Ignatius a loose legal framework was once again in operation. Therefore, for Meier, the very strong tie to Judaism in the Gospel reflects the period of the Jamesian party domination. The Jewish tone of the Gospel, the interests and style of putting Jewish customs, rites, and the rabbinic style of argumentation, the emphasis on the Mosaic law and the fulfilment of prophecy, and the presentation of disputes with Pharisaic Judaism are the evidence that the Gospel was composed in an influential location with a large Jewish population. On the other hand, Matthew's concern for Gentile mission and his interest in dealing with Gentile communities such as the stories about the Magi (2.1-12), the centurion with his sick slave (8.5-13), the Canaanite woman (15.21-28), the centurion and his party at the cross (27.54), and the legitimisation of a mission to all nations (28.18-20) reinforce the view that the Gospel was most probably written in a Gentile world. These facts would indicate that the Gospel's place of origin would need to be a melting pot of Jewish and Gentile influences which best suggests Antioch for locating the Gospel of Matthew.

Other supportive evidence comes from the Petrine traditions used in the Gospel and the high position of Peter in the redactional elements of the author's work. From

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<sup>58</sup> See G. Downey, 'Antioch' *IDB* 1, 145-48; also Meier, 1983, 22.

<sup>59</sup> Meier, 1983, 22-23.

the Pauline tradition we learn that Peter was very active in Antioch (Gal. 2.11-14) and had great influence on the church at Antioch so that Paul broke his companionship with Barnabas on the account of his confrontation with Peter. Paul even had to redirect his mission from Antioch to Asia Minor; and rarely returned to Antioch (Acts 18. 22-23). Apparently Peter won the battle with Paul in Antioch and Meier thus suggests that Peter was the first bishop of Antioch.<sup>60</sup> Downey has noted that Matthew describes Peter as the foundation of the church (16.18) which would seem to influence Meier's hypothesis.<sup>61</sup> Ignatius' close relationship with the written Gospel of Matthew in his letters also reaffirms the probability of Antioch for the location of Matthew's Gospel.<sup>62</sup>

The final argument in favour of Antiochene provenance is the consequence of an examination of the eucharistic sayings at the Last Supper (Mt. 22.26-29). These are in conflict with the Pauline form in I Cor. 11.23-26 and echoed in Lk. 22.17-20. J. Jeremias claims that Paul's form of eucharistic saying represents the Antioch form of the 40s.<sup>63</sup> Jeremias himself makes a statement that Paul received his eucharistic formula at his conversion but the developed formulation quoted in I Cor. 11 was learned later by Paul at Antioch.<sup>64</sup> Paul stresses that he received it 'from the Lord' (I Cor. 11.23). However, it is possible that Paul gave his formula which he had received from the Lord at his conversion, to the Corinthian Christians who were his children in the faith; while the Antiochene church practised the formula probably passed on by

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<sup>60</sup> Meier, 1983, 24.

<sup>61</sup> G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest*, (Princeton: University Press, 1961), 283.

<sup>62</sup> We have had a good deal on the linkage between Ignatius and the written Gospel of Matthew in section 3.1 of this project and there is no need to repeat here, see this thesis 93-5.

<sup>63</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, (London: SCM, 1966), 188.

<sup>64</sup> Jeremias, 1966, 188.

James in Jerusalem. It is a reasonable assumption because Paul joined the Christian community in Antioch later and lost his influence after the debate with the James party. That is to say, the second Christian generation at Antioch might have still used the Jerusalem church tradition, possibly introduced by James as a model. Paul on the other hand introduced the formula he received from the Lord at his conversion to the churches where he was able to be a significant. Thus, this difference of eucharistic forms in Matthew's Gospel and in Pauline tradition (I Cor. 11.23-26) does not prevent the possibility of an Antiochene location for the Gospel and it is best to conclude that the Gospel of Matthew was written at Antioch in the form we have today.

### 3.3 Authorship in Relation to the Author's Ethnic Identity

The authorship of the Gospel of Matthew has attracted relatively little attention from scholars in recent discussion.<sup>65</sup> The principal issues in authorship for Matthean scholarship are: (1) Was the author a Jew or a Gentile? (2) Was the author a disciple of Jesus? (3) Was the Gospel the composition of one or more authors?<sup>66</sup> However, as the central question of this research is 'ethnic issues in the Gospel of Matthew', this thesis will concentrate only on authorship in relation to ethnicity in the Gospel. Thus this section will deal only with the issue of Jewish authorship or Gentile authorship, by investigating internal and external evidences relating to the question.

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<sup>65</sup> Among a huge number of Matthean scholars the following scholars give close attention to authorship. E. L. Abel, "Who Wrote Matthew?" *NTS* 17 (1970-71) 138-52; K. W. Clark "The Gentile Bias in Matthew," *JBL* 66 (1947) 165-72; R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 609-22; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7, A Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 93-95. J. P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew in the First Gospel*, (New York: Paulist 1979); P. Nepper Christensen, *Das Matthäusevangelium: Ein judenchristliches Evangelium?* (Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget), 1958; G. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971).

<sup>66</sup> Ernest L. Abel argues for two authors. He establishes his argument on the basis of the anti-Jewish pronouncements and on the other hand, the pro-Jewish sayings with the view that the Gospel might



There is a consensus that the Gospel has three sources: the Q source, the Marcan source, and the redactional material inserted by the author or authors of the Gospel which is designated as 'M'. We will look at Matthew's use of his sources in relation to his ethnic background and examine internal evidence and external evidence with a view to identifying the author's ethnic identity (a Jew or a Gentile?); which would help us to have a fairer understanding of his intention for his community from an ethnic perspective. This initial inquiry into the author's ethnic background will be taken up further in this section.

### **3.3.1 *Internal Evidence Relating to the Author's Ethnic Identity***

#### **(a) The author's Use of his Sources in Relation to his Ethnic Identity**

In the composition of the Gospel it is the consensus of a majority of scholars that Matthew used Mark as the basis and framework of his Gospel but also used a written collection of Jesus' sayings which is generally called Q<sup>67</sup> to which he added his own redactional material. Matthew follows Mark very closely especially in order and structure, but on some occasions he presents Marcan material in his Gospel with a slightly different emphasis. In relation to the author's ethnic background it is necessary to have a close look at the section on purity and food laws in Mt. 15. 1-20 and Mk. 7.1-23 in regard to his use of Mark and the Q

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have been written by two authors, a Jew and a Gentile; see Abel, *NTS*, 17, 138-152. But his argument has not been widely accepted.

<sup>67</sup> John Riches gives a simple and clear explanation of the two-source hypothesis with illustrations and diagram, see John Riches, *Matthew: New Testament Guides*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, reprinted 1997), 19-28.

Source.<sup>68</sup> Both Mark and Matthew discuss the dietary laws in these passages. Mark is critical of the law presenting a Jesus who declares all foods clean (Mk. 7.19b) and thereby frees the Gentile converts from dietary rules. Mk. 7.18-23 is therefore offered as an interpretation of Mk. 7.15. But Q contains few Jesus traditions which are critical of the law.<sup>69</sup> When Matthew is in the position to make his choice between Mark and Q, he chooses Q in regard to the laws with the result that for Matthew all the laws are valid (Mt. 23.23-26; cf. Lk. 11.39-42). The different interpretation of the food laws in Mark and Matthew, in particular Matthew's stress on the validity of the laws, implies that the author of the First Gospel is likely to be a Jew who intends to uphold the Law.<sup>70</sup>

The Sermon on the Mount is also another feature that indicates the Jewishness of the author. Clearly in Matthew's composition of his Gospel, he follows Mark as primary source but he plays down elements critical of Torah; by contrast, he gives Q material, which upholds Torah, a position of prominence and adds his own special material (5.17-20). In particular, in the construction of the Sermon on the Mount, it is supposed that the Sayings Source (Q) is the basis for the construction of the discourse and the evangelist shaped it.<sup>71</sup> Mark does not have a comparable section on the Sermon on the Mount in his Gospel; only Matthew and Luke have such extended discourses in their Gospels, which indicates the probability of taking their framework

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<sup>68</sup> We will make detailed study on these passages in chapter four of our thesis in relating to ethnicity. Here our attention is focused on the author's ethnic identity by investigating his intention in regard to the dietary laws.

<sup>69</sup> Luz, 1990, 76.

<sup>70</sup> Purity and food laws will be discussed more in detailed in 4. 1 of this work in quest of the Matthean community's ethnic background.

<sup>71</sup> Luz, 1990, 213.

(Matthew and Luke) from Q.<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, Luke located the occasion on the plain whereas Matthew puts it on the Mount. The motif of the mount is found at the heart of Jewish tradition. God appeared to Moses on Mt. Horeb (Exod. 3.1-2), God appeared and spoke to the people of Israel on Mount Sinai (Exod. 19.16-20) and gave the ten commandments on Mt. Sinai. Yahweh dwells in Mt. Zion (Ps. 74.2; Isa. 52.8; Joel 3.21), Abraham attempted to sacrifice his son Isaac on a mount in the land of Moriah (Gen. 22.1-2), etc. Terence L. Donaldson interestingly discusses the mountain motif of Matthew from a religious-historical perspective and concludes that every aspect of Matthew's mountain motif is consistent with the picture of his Jewish-Christian church and their Life-Setting. The mountain motif also represents the Zion eschatology and it is likely that this mountain motif is the redactional work of Matthew in order to reinforce his community's sense of its Jewish roots.<sup>73</sup> When we compare this mountain theme in the religious life of the Jews, and Matthew's location of the Sermon on a mountain, it would seem to suggest the probability of Jewish authorship.

Moreover, in the Sermon on the Mount the Matthean Jesus gives instruction for the fulfilment of the Law and the prophets which again indicates the author's close link to the Old Testament. Jesus appeals to his disciples and the crowds to fulfil the Old Testament prophetic sayings and the Law as he (Jesus) himself fulfils them by his deeds and proclamation. Thus Matthew presents the Old Testament as the

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<sup>72</sup> H. T. Wrege argues that there was no Q in the Sermon on the Mount and the discourse is based on reliable oral tradition. See Luz, 1990, 213, n. 4. See H. T. Wrege, *Die Überlieferungsgeschichte der Bergpredigt, WUNT 9*, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1968). Luz argues that Wrege sees only the question of the wording and does not discuss the sequence of material in Sermon on the Mount and Luke 6.20-49. Wrege is one-sided in his argument.

<sup>73</sup> Terence L. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 211-3; see also 3-9, 30-83, and elsewhere.

permanently valid word of God (Mt. 5.17).<sup>74</sup> For Matthew the Old Testament is the basis and centre of God's will and divine plan (Mt. 7.12; cf. 22.40). The emphasis on the Old Testament and the affirmation of the validity of the Law and the prophetic sayings reinforce the view that the author of the Gospel is most likely to be a Jew.

(b) Linguistic Usage:

The use of φυλακτήριον, 'phylactery' in 23.5 is a significant one in relation to our study here. We have only this reference in the entire New Testament to the use of phylactery. It literally means an amulet which is used as a kind of guard for preservative purposes and worn against evil. According to the text the Pharisees and the scribes wore it and they sat on the seat of Moses.

K. W. Clark takes this point to support his hypothesis of Gentile authorship by accepting G. G. Fox's explanation which considers that the evangelist has attributed Gentile superstition to the Pharisees.<sup>75</sup> They misrepresented the more reverent understanding of the *tepillin* which is supposed to recall the Exodus, but they called them phylacteries.<sup>76</sup> Some have seen this as a Gentile attack on Jewish superstition. Davies and Allison argue that the development of φυλακτήριον is a natural translation because the *tepillin* contained Scriptures which promised God's protection against demons, sin, or bad fortune, (*Ep. Arist.* 159; Josephus, *Ant.* 4. 212-13).<sup>77</sup> Additionally

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<sup>74</sup> Luz, 1990, 216.

<sup>75</sup> K. W. Clark, in his article, 'The Gentile Bias in Matthew,' *JBL* 66 (1947), 165-72 vigorously argues for Gentile authorship of the Gospel and some scholars follow him. See the discussion of W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Vol. 1*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 18.

<sup>76</sup> Clark, 1947, 165-72, citing G. G. Fox, 'The Matthean Misrepresentation of Tephillin', *JNES* 1 (1942), 373-7, cf. Davies and Allison, 1988, 18.

<sup>77</sup> G. Vermes, 'Pre-Mishnaic Jewish Worship and the Phylacteries from the Dead Sea', *VT* 9 (1959), 65-72.

Matthew is arguing that the Pharisees seek greater religious status by their use of phylacteries (cf. 23.1-12). Therefore, it is perfectly conceivable as inner-Jewish polemic. Moreover, Moses' seat in this passage implies detailed knowledge of Jewish custom which reinforces Jewish authorship.

In fact, for the Jews, φυλακτήρια were strips of parchment with a portion of the Law written upon them, which is believed to be of efficacy against evil spirits. Davies and Allison also argue that 23.5a is redactional work which is to be combined with 23.4 and 5b ff. Moreover, 23.5b belongs to the M material of chapter 23 which is generally taken as of Jewish origin. They propose that it was the work of a Jewish-Christian community, not of an uninformed Gentile. The author, being well acquainted with Jewish contemporary literature translated '*tepillin*' (cf. Exod. 13.16; Deut. 6.8-9; 11.18) by φυλακτήρια. Jerome and Chrysostom who both spent time in studying Jewish customs also use 'phylacteries' as a translation of '*tepillin*' (PL 26.168) and *Hm. On Mt.* 72.2, also cf. Justin, *Dial* 46.5).<sup>78</sup> In the assessment of Davies and Allison, the use of 'phylacteries' to refer to the wearing of *tepillin* by the Pharisees does not imply a negative criticism; for them it is rather the symbol of divine protection for the Pharisees of the first century. Moreover, it indicates that the author knows closely the Jewish practice of prayer and the dress worn by the Pharisees which is further evidence that the author is likely to be a Jew.

Mark uses παββουεῖ in Mk. 10.51 but Matthew avoids it in Mt. 20.33 and he replaces it with κύριε 'Lord'. A Jew is more likely to be sensitive in the use of

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<sup>78</sup> J. H. Tigay, 'On the term "Phylacteries" (Mt. 23.5)' *HTR* 72 (1979), 46-8. He discusses especially the root of the term *tepillin*; cf. also Davies and Allison, 1988, 18.

‘rabbi’ especially after 70 CE when it became a title. The use of ‘Lord’ suggests the author to have been a Christian-Jewish believer in Jesus.<sup>79</sup>

Luz sees that Matthean Greek is influenced by Jewish style of Greek. His language is sometimes very close to the language of rabbinic Judaism of the time.<sup>80</sup> Bacon observes that Matthew used synagogue Greek<sup>81</sup> which implies that the evangelist has a Jewish background which was closely linked with the synagogue language. In following Bacon’s thesis Luz points to the following in identifying the Matthean language of Greek with the synagogue Greek that (1) Matthean Greek is more differentiated, polished and elevated than the popular Semitic Greek of Mark or Q. (2) The style is tightly formulated and more condensed than the Marcan style. The narratives are tightened and the abridgements represent only the essential features. (3) The evangelist used repetitive style with leading words, chasms, or inclusions as a means of interpretation. This formulaic character is a kind of basic Old Testament style which is found in the Priestly source and Chronicles. (4) Matthew was also influenced by the Septuagint.<sup>82</sup> Luz sees that he was closer to the Septuagint than his primary sources, which indicates that the author had a Hellenistic Jewish background.<sup>83</sup> (5) Matthew’s Greek was influenced by Jewish style of literature by using occasionally rabbinic features.<sup>84</sup> Luz comments also that there are numerous

<sup>79</sup> See also Davies and Allison, 1988, 20.

<sup>80</sup> Luz, 1990, 50, n. 75. See also B. Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and his world of thought*, SNTSMS 41, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), who presents δικαιοσύνη a Matthean key term, within its Jewish linguistic history.

<sup>81</sup> Benjamin W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew*, (London: Constable & Company Limited, 1930), 497-99.

<sup>82</sup> When the evangelist quotes direct from the Old Testament on his own account he uses uniformly the LXX; and in addition to this, when he used a borrowed quotation that rests upon the Hebrew as in Mt. 12:17-20, the extension verse 21 is taken from the LXX. See Bacon, 1930, 496.

<sup>83</sup> For example, the Fulfilment Quotations at 2:23; see Luz, 1990, 49-50.

<sup>84</sup> The use of δικαιοσύνη is a significant example in the Jewish characteristic and style of linguistic usage in Matthew’s Gospel, see Luz, 1990, 50.

similarities of the language of Matthew's Gospel with the Septuagint and with Jewish linguistic characteristics<sup>85</sup> which indicate that the author is likely to be a Jew.

(c) Passages which Indicate the Author's knowledge of Jewish customs and beliefs in relation to his Ethnic Identity

The Gospel shows an intimate knowledge of Judaism. As we have seen, the author knows about phylacteries and the fringed garments that were worn by orthodox Jews at their prayers (23.5), and the intention of the scribes and the Pharisees to be in a high position in the synagogue (23.6), the diligence of seeking for proselytes (23.15), and understands the difference between free-will donation and sacrifice which is compulsory or the degrees between greater and lesser commandments (23.19). The author follows Jewish ways of presenting incidents as an aid to easy remembrance; for instance, the five discourses in 5-7.27; 10; 13.1-52; 18; 23-25 chapters are similar to the five books of the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the five divisions of the Megilloth, and the Aboth.<sup>86</sup> These facts further reinforce the Jewish authorship of the Gospel.

The mission discourse in 10.5-6 "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" sharply restricts the disciples' mission to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans. Similarly, the saying to the Canaanite woman which Matthew adds to the Marcan version (cf. Mk. 7.25-30): 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (15.24) restates such particularism. In contrast to the Pauline law-free Gospel, the

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<sup>85</sup> Luz, 1990, 80; also 49-52.

<sup>86</sup> Abel, *NTS*, 17, 143.

Matthean Gospel upholds the law by stating that Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to fulfil the law (5.17); and the law must be obeyed in detail (5.18). The use of binding and losing in 16.17-18 and 18.18 has Jewish background.<sup>87</sup> The author's warning in 24.20 indicates that he is a good Sabbath observer. Matthew shows more interest in Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes than Luke and Mark in the general presentation of their Gospels (Mt. 2.4; 3.7) which also indicates his Jewish background. Our evidence testifies that the author of the Gospel is most likely to be a Jewish-Christian.

The structure in Mt. 1.18-25 is common to some Old Testament narratives, for example, Gen. 16; Judg. 13; Gen. 17-18; I Kgs. 13.1-10; 1 Chro. 22.9-10; Isa. 7.14-17; etc.<sup>88</sup> Matthew's understanding of Torah especially in 5.17-20 strongly suggests Jewish authorship. In addition, the emphasis upon Davidic descent (1.1-17) and the Old Testament fulfilment sayings give a strong impression of Jewish authorship.

#### (d) Style and Structure Relating to the Author's Ethnic Identity

The structure of the genealogy, with its ordering in groups of fourteen, and the particular emphasis on David indicate the Jewish interests of the author.<sup>89</sup> As Allison states, the new Moses typology in Matthew, Mt. 1-2 the birth story and the temptation in the wilderness present Jesus as a new Moses,<sup>90</sup> and Jerusalem as the holy city in 4.5; 27.53. Mt. 5.33-37, represents Jewish religious practice, such as

<sup>87</sup> See Davies and Allison, 1988, 26; also see the same work Vol. II, 1991, 621-634; 789.

<sup>88</sup> For more discussion see Davies and Allison, 1988, 196-7.

<sup>89</sup> Davies and Allison, 1988, 26, 163-5.

<sup>90</sup> D. C. Allison, Jr. *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 137-172. Allison compares Moses and Jesus in many more ways such as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and Moses' on Sinai, and contrasts the Torah and Jesus' teaching, 172-184; It relates Matthew's use of typology to other Jewish writings.



oath taking. The knowledge of the Pharisees' behaviour, the enthronement of Moses' seat and the command of obedience to those who sit on Moses' seat indicate the Jewish background of the author.

(e) Comparison with Contemporary Literature Relating to the Author's Ethnic Background

Moreover, much of the special Matthean material seems to have links with its contemporary Jewish literature which suggests Jewish authorship. For instance, 7. 2 is seen in the Mishna treatise, *Sota* 1.7: 'with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you;'<sup>91</sup> and a parallel statement with Mt. 18.19 is found in *Mishna Aboth* 3.2: 'if two sit together and words of the law (are spoken) between them, the Divine Presence rests between them.'<sup>92</sup> Interestingly there are also some other parallel passages, for example, Mt. 7.3-5=*Baba Bathra* 15b; v. 37=*Baba Mazia* 49a; these parallels suggest that the author has some good knowledge of Jewish literature and Judaism<sup>93</sup>. There are also terms and figures of speech which probably only a Jewish redactor would employ. Especially, these specific terms and phrases: and as the saying about the 'yoke' (11.29-30) which is found only in Matthew among the

<sup>91</sup> See H. Danby, trans. & ed., *The Mishnah*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 294.

<sup>92</sup> See also Danby, 1933, 450. Comparing with Mishna and other Jewish literature does not mean that Matthew's Gospel was influenced by the literatures quoted because some of those literatures, particularly the Mishna, could probably be later than the First Gospel. The intention here is to show the linkage between Matthew's Gospel and other contemporary literature in order to suggest that Matthew's Gospel and his contemporary Jewish writings had a good link and one influenced the other which implies that the author of the First Gospel came from and worked within the Jewish world of literature and religion.

<sup>93</sup> In this case all the cited literature may not mean pre-Matthean literature. It is compared in order to show how literature in the time of the Evangelist influenced one another. This is to illustrate that as the Matthean Gospel was influenced by its contemporary Jewish literature, especially the pre-Matthean Gospel literature, so in the same way the Matthean Gospel seems to have had some influence on other post-Matthean Gospel literature in the world of the Diaspora Judaism which demonstrates that the

Gospels,<sup>94</sup> the expression and the use of 'the kingdom of heaven'; and expressions like 'dogs' and 'swine' (7.6) as metaphors for Gentiles and unbelievers which are found only in Matthew.<sup>95</sup> From our sources and evidence we can come to a conclusion that the Jewish authorship of the Gospel is most likely.

(f) Interpreting the Mission Discourses in Relation to Jewish Authorship of the Gospel

While the evidence for Jewish authorship is strong, on the one hand, there are some indications that suggest the possibility of Gentile authorship. The inconsistency of the Gospel particularly in the mission discourses is one point that could suggest Gentile authorship. Obviously the mission discourses in 10.5-6 and 15.24 limit the mission only to the Jews and they reject the Gentiles exclusively. In 18.17 also the author expresses a thoroughly negative attitude towards the Gentiles. On the other hand, contradictorily, the texts in 24.14 and 28.19 speak of the inclusion of the Gentiles. These quite contradictory mission statements, opposing one another, raise the question: if the Gospel is written by a Jew, how can he inclusively speak of the Gentiles in contrast to the other pro-Jewish texts? It has been argued that the mission discourses are divided into pre-resurrection and post-resurrection. The mission of Jesus during his life time was limited to the house of Israel, (10.5-6; 15.24), but it was extended to the Gentile world after the resurrection through the disciples (28.19, cf. 24.14) so that the mission discourses do not contradict one another in motivation.

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Gospel was very likely written in the midst of Jewish literature and in the Jewish literature style of writing.

Advocacy of Gentile mission does not necessarily suggest Gentile authorship.<sup>96</sup> In other words, this argument says that the same redactor arranged his material in an orderly way; that the mission was initiated by Jesus for Israel but was extended by the early Church to the Gentile world.

Another difficult text is 21.43, 'The kingdom of God will be taken away from you (Jews) and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.' This anti-Jewish phrase seems to give the impression that the Jews will be replaced by the Gentile Christians or at least the newly emerging Christian Church of the time. This is reinforced by the parable of the wicked servants in the vineyard (20.1-16). A. J. Saldarini has strongly argued that the text of 21.43 is an inner Jewish polemic, not an affirmation of Christianity against Judaism;<sup>97</sup> that is to say that the text here in 21.43 is not directed against the entire Jewish people but only against the leaders of Israel and does not have any implication for Gentile authorship. In another words, the author gives an apologetic argument for his community against the leaders of Israel. As the parable in 20.1-16 is the reinforcement of the text in 21.43, for Saldarini, it is part of the same attack of Matthew on the leaders of Israel.

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<sup>94</sup> Yoke is not limited only to Jewish literature; however, it has its Old Testament background, cf. Gen. 27. 40; Num. 19.2; Deut. 21.3, 28.48; Isa. 9.4, 58.6; 1Kgs. 12.4, etc. It indicates the author's special interest in Old Testament usage.

<sup>95</sup> Abel, *NTS*, 17, 144.

<sup>96</sup> See also Stanton, 1992, 47-53, 176-7.

<sup>97</sup> See A. Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish-Christian Community*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 44-46. Saldarini's argument will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

### 3.3.2 *External Evidence Relating to the Author's Ethnic Identity*

The earliest claim and the most authoritative external evidence relating to the authorship of the Gospel of Matthew was made by Papias (Bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor) and is found in Eusebius, *H.E.* 3. 39. 16. Papias states that Matthew kept a record of Jesus' sayings in his tongue (Aramaic) and everyone translated those sayings of Jesus in the best way each one could do. This statement becomes the basis for our Christian tradition for the authorship of Matthew, an eye-witness disciple of Jesus who was listed among the twelve disciples (Mt. 10.3; Mk. 3.18; Lk. 6.15; Acts 1.13).<sup>98</sup> Also Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (ca. 260-340) has a record that Pantaenus, the teacher of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 15-215) 'went to India, and the tradition is that he there found his own arrival anticipated by some who were acquainted with the Gospel according to Matthew; for Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them and left them the writing of Matthew in Hebrew letters, and this writing was preserved until the time mentioned' (*H. E.* 5. 10. 3).<sup>99</sup> Eusebius furthermore records Papias' saying that 'Matthew also among the Hebrews published a written Gospel in their own dialect, when Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and founding the church there, (*H. E.* 5. 8. 2, quoting Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3. 1. 1).<sup>100</sup> Eusebius, 'the father of church history,' Origen (ca. 185-225), the great exegete and editor of the Hexapla, Clement of Alexandria, the head of the catechetical school of Alexandria and the author of some very learned books, and Irenaeus, the great apologist, were all of them Greek fluent readers and writers of Greek. They all consider the canonical Matthew to be the translation of a Semitic

<sup>98</sup> For a fuller discussion, see Nepper-Christensen, 1958, 37-75.

<sup>99</sup> See also Davies and Allison, 1988, 8.

original.<sup>101</sup> Among modern scholars George Kennedy holds the view that Matthew was written in Aramaic earlier than the Greek Marcan Gospel.<sup>102</sup>

But one problem with this tradition is this: if Matthew, the disciple of Jesus, an eye-witness, composed the whole of the Gospel, why does he need to depend so much on the Greek Gospel of Mark to provide the framework of his Gospel which originated in Aramaic?<sup>103</sup> Another difficulty is that almost all modern scholars agree that our Gospel is of Greek origin and there is no indication for translated work in its style, language, or any form in the literature. These questions may lead one to doubt that whether Papias is an entirely reliable source, not least as Eusebius comments that he was a man of little intelligence (*H. E.* 3. 39. 12-13). The issue at hand is that the external evidence points to a Palestinian or Hellenistic-Jewish original written in Aramaic or Hebrew; on the other hand, the internal evidence suggests an origin outside Palestine, written in Greek and using Greek sources.

Many modern scholars reject the external evidence and some of them even suppose the Gospel to have been written by a Gentile Christian.<sup>104</sup> Nepper-Christensen investigates the patristic statements in great detail and comes out with the following conclusions. (1) All the traditions that point to the view that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew for the Hebrews emanate from Papias. Thus, Papias is the only witness of this tradition. (2) Hieronymus (Jerome) is not reliable in his claim that he

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<sup>100</sup> See also Davies and Allison, 1988, 8.

<sup>101</sup> Davies and Allison, 1988, 12.

<sup>102</sup> G. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 45, 146, n. 11., cf. Davies and Allison, 1988, 12-13. Marcan priority has been convincingly argued and the consensus is that the Matthean Gospel was written after the Marcan Gospel was well spread so we do not need to argue here for Marcan priority.

<sup>103</sup> A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, (London: Macmillan, 1915), xxviii. Also Davies and Allison, 1988, 9.

<sup>104</sup> Clark, *JBL* 66 (1947), 165-72

had seen and copied the Hebrew Gospel, as referred to in his work ca. 392.<sup>105</sup> (3) The First Gospel which is largely dependent on the Greek Marcan Gospel is not a translated document and therefore Papias' statement preserved in Eusebius, *H. E.* 3. 39 should be rejected.<sup>106</sup> J. Kürzinger has made a careful analysis of Eusebius *H. E.* 3. 39. 16 and concluded that Matthew was written in Greek originally but closely followed the Hebrew or Semitic style of writing.<sup>107</sup> Luz and some other modern scholars are quite confident that Ma[tthew] 'is at home in his Greek Bible.'<sup>108</sup>

Davies and Allison argue against Eusebius' criticism of Papias as unintelligent, which is taken to be true by many modern scholars. In the Judaism of the time, intelligence was not considered to be the sign of a reliable transmitter of tradition. On the contrary, the less intelligent the *tanna*, the more reliable he was. The intelligent men tend to modify and alter what they say and pass on in tradition.<sup>109</sup> In the opinion of Davies and Allison, Papias' witness is therefore not disqualified, and also, none of the church Fathers seems to dispute the authorship of Matthew, the apostle. According to Irenaeus, Papias was an eyewitness, a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp (ca. 60-155 CE; see *Adv. Haer.* 3. 3. 4; cf. also Eusebius, *H. E.* 5. 20. 6). Eusebius rejects the view that Papias was an eye witness of the apostles but the passage he quotes does not convincingly support his denial (*H. E.* 3. 39. 3-4). Papias himself also wrote that he received it from 'the elders' and from those who had heard 'the elders', (Eusebius, *H. E.* 3. 39. 3-4). We assume that, whoever the elders may be,

<sup>105</sup> *De viris illustribus* (PL 23.643; cf. the conclusions of P. Vielhauer, in Hennecke 1, pp. 126-36).

<sup>106</sup> Davies and Allison, 1988, 12. See Nepper-Christensen, 1958, 37-75.

<sup>107</sup> See Davies and Allison, 1988, 14-16. For more detail and fuller discussion, see J. Kürzinger, 'Zur Komposition der Bergpredigt nach Matthäus.', *Bib* 40 (1959), 569-89.

<sup>108</sup> Luz, 1990, 77.

they must be bearers of the tradition which goes back to the first century CE and that they are reliable sources.

At this point a few observations in relation to the ethnic origin of the Gospel's author can be made. Firstly, both Kennedy and Kürzinger are in any case, not on the side of Gentile authorship. Secondly, it is possible that prior to the Papias tradition about the λόγια, Matthew had been associated with the First Gospel. But it is uncertain whether Papias' predecessors did so identify it. If Papias received a tradition about *logia* Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ, it could be originally a reference to the Q document.<sup>109</sup> The supposition is that an earlier form of Q could have been put together in apostolic times and composed in Hebrew or Aramaic and that is what is attributed to Matthew by the Church Fathers in our tradition. Thirdly, even if Papias' witness is to be denied, the question still is: how do we explain the statement about Matthew? If the *logia* did not mean Q before Papias, it would still suggest that he (Papias) knew a tradition that the apostle Matthew wrote a Gospel for Jews who believed in Jesus (cf. Eusebius, *H. E.* 6. 14. 2). This would suggest that even before Papias our First Gospel was believed to be written by a Jew. The Church Fathers may be wrong in their claim that the First Gospel was written by Matthew, the disciple, originally in Aramaic or Hebrew, but the facts remain supporting Jewish authorship.

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<sup>109</sup> Here Davies and Allison follow the argument laid up first by B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Uppsala and Lund, Gleerup, 1964), 93-112; cf. Davies and Allison, 1988, 13.

<sup>110</sup> Davies and Allison, 1988, 17.

### 3.3.3. Conclusion

It is not certain whether Matthew the disciple wrote the First Gospel or someone else, nor do we know exactly who wrote the Gospel. The external evidence is not always reliable to confirm the authorship of any one individual. Although this external evidence is not strong enough to confirm the authorship of an individual, nevertheless it provides some support for Jewish authorship in the question of the author's ethnic identity. The internal evidence has more features to confirm Jewish authorship than the external evidence. The Gospel presents the law in the words of the Matthean Jesus as a set of moral precepts but the scribes and Pharisees consider it as a set of ceremonial observances (23.23). This fact suggests the Jewish authorship and indicates also that the author is a Christian Jew. This Christian-Jewish editorial work is significant in the text of 5.21-47 where the rabbinic teachings and the teachings of Jesus are compared and contrasted in an orderly way. However, both the internal and external evidence indicate Jewish authorship of the Gospel. Clearly in any study of ethnic issues in Matthew's community the ethnic origin of the author colours our perception of that community.



## Chapter Four

### ETHNICITY IN THE MATTHEAN COMMUNITY

#### 4. 1 The Ethnic Background of the Matthean Community

##### *Introduction*

In our conclusion to the preceding chapter we located the Matthean community in Antioch at a date between 80-90 CE; we will now therefore, analyse the Matthean community with these assumptions from an ethnic perspective. The central question in this section is: what was the composition of the Matthean congregation, i. e. were they mainly Jews, mainly Gentiles, or was there an equal mixture of both. In another words, from what ethnic background was the Matthean community drawn? If the answer is that the Matthean community had come from a Jewish background, then we would raise the question: what is the attitude of the community towards Gentiles? But if we conclude that they came from Jewish and Gentile ethnic backgrounds and formed a mixed or even multicultural community, it would be necessary to investigate ethnicity and group cohesion in the community in the following sections. However, the attention of this section is focused on the ethnic background of the community.

##### 4. 1. 1. Paul's relationship with the Community of Antioch

##### *(a) A brief discussion on Paul's Conversion and apostleship*

Before we do critical examination of ethnicity in the Matthean community in Antioch, it is important and necessary to describe the relationship of Paul with the church of Antioch, not least because the breakdown of the relationship seems to be the

turning-point of the community in practice and in theology from a gospel of uncircumcision to a gospel of circumcision.

The book of Acts records that Paul's conversion and commission to his apostolic ministry was by a vision (9:3-19; cf. Gal. 1:15-17) which took place probably in c. 35 CE.<sup>1</sup> According to Acts' account, he was a persecutor of the disciples of the Lord (9:1-2, 14). While he was travelling from Jerusalem to Damascus, to accuse any disciples there in Damascus, the Lord Jesus revealed himself to him in a vision, in which he saw Jesus face to face and that resulted in his conversion and commission to his apostolic ministry (Acts 9:3- 15). After his conversion, Acts describes, Paul stayed in Damascus for several days with the disciples and proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God (9:19b-22), to which he probably added an account of his personal experience of conversion in order that he might win the favour and recognition of the disciples in Damascus. The disciples were in fact, according to Acts, astonishingly happy at Paul's proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God but the Jews were furious by his saying that Jesus was the Christ (9:20-22). So the Jews plotted to kill him but the disciples carried him out secretly and saved him

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<sup>1</sup> See also Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 62-7. Johannes Munck casts doubts on the term 'Paul's conversion' and argues from the accounts of events in Paul's so-called conversion and his use of the Old Testament prophets that the term 'conversion' is not fitting to Paul, see his work in *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, (London: SCM Press, 1959), 11-35. K.O. Stendahl argues further that Paul's experience was not conversion because conversion means a change of religion, see K.O. Stendahl, *Paul among the Jews and Gentiles*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 11. A. F. Segal also supports this argument and states that 'Paul did not leave Judaism entirely in becoming a follower of Jesus,' see A. F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children*, (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 103. However, what Paul regarded formerly as worthy of all he now counted as loss (Phil. 3:4-8), and on the other hand, as N. Walter states, what he had counted as blasphemous he now considers to be God's will, see N. Walter, 'Paul and the Early Christian Jesus-tradition,' in *Paul and Jesus*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 77. Paul's own words in Phil. 3:3-8 testify that there was a radical reorientation or a transformation in his life at the Damascus experience which resulted in his apostleship, see also R. H. Thouless, *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 104-20; also B. R. Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*,

from the Jews (9:23-25), which implies that Paul obtained the favour of the disciples at Damascus. From Damascus he travelled to Jerusalem attempting to join the disciples there but he was not accepted at his first appearance; they were still afraid of him for they did not know that he was already a disciple (9:26, cf. 9:12; also Gal. 1:22-23). However, by the commendation of Barnabas he was first accepted by the apostles (9:27) and then by the disciples (vv. 28-29). The same problem occurred in Jerusalem as that which had already taken place in Damascus, viz. that the Hellenists attempted to kill him. As in Damascus the disciples planned a way-out and brought him down to Tarsus where he took refuge at his birth place. J. B. Lightfoot supposed that for Paul it was not only seeking asylum but a time of retirement,<sup>2</sup> and Taylor suggests that it was possibly with his family as a time of family gathering.<sup>3</sup> Again, this secret plan for rescuing Paul by the disciples implies that Paul was deeply favoured by the disciples in Jerusalem.

Unfortunately we have contradictory accounts between Acts and Galatians. In Galatians Paul says that he did not go up to Jerusalem in order to get confirmation of his conversion and apostleship from the other apostles who were senior to him; instead, he went away into Arabia; only then he returned to Damascus (Gal. 1:17). Acts totally misses out the episode of Paul's life in Arabia. If we are faced with two sources, one of which contains reports of an incident, the other is silent, which one are we to favour? In such a case there is a prior assumption in favour of source containing the report, unless it is contradicted by the other account. In this case Acts is

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(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 40; Segal, *Paul the Convert*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 300; Segal, 1986, 103.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, (London: Macmillan, 1890), 303.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, 1992, 87.

completely silent and Galatians narrates the episode of Paul's life spent in Arabia. It is, therefore, reasonably sound to take the one that gives the report of the event since the other source, the Lukan account, is silent. Moreover, if a personal testimony and other source are contradicting each other the personal testimony of the actor is preferable over the second-hand report of others. Therefore, it gives us a reasonable right to assume that Paul would have spent a lengthy time in Arabia as described in Galatians.<sup>4</sup> How long Paul spent in Arabia is not mentioned in his personal testimony in Gal. 1:17. There are at least three views with regard to the question of why Paul withdrew into the wilderness of Arabia. The first view holds that he went to Arabia for the purpose of contemplative preparation for his future work, and the second view is that he went there to begin his missionary work. The third view holds that Paul deliberately spent his time in the wilderness of Arabia as a means to maintaining ritual purification.<sup>5</sup> E.D.W. Burton argues that Paul went to Arabia not for missionary purpose but for withdrawal from contact with men which would enable him to spend time in meditation and purification.<sup>6</sup> B. Gerhardsson follows Burton and he argues further that Paul's purpose was to free himself from his old body of knowledge in order to prepare himself for the new task of mission that required a new body of knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Taylor argues that Gerhardsson's sources in support of his thesis (*b. 'Abod. Zar.* 19ab; *b. B. Mes.* 85a) are very late<sup>8</sup>. However, such a retreat was a known practice in the religious life of Israel: Elijah was in the wilderness (1 Kgs 19:4-18), and Jesus too went into the wilderness before he began his public ministry (Mt.

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<sup>4</sup> This argument is about whether Paul spent his time in the desert of Arabia or not, the issue of the Jerusalem Apostolic Decree has not been discussed here.

<sup>5</sup> See Taylor, 1992, 67-8.

<sup>6</sup> E.D.W. Burton, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1921), 55-57.

4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13). Moreover, the suggestion that Paul went to Arabia for missionary purposes is very unlikely, because we have no evidence to say that Paul established any churches in Arabia. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that Paul withdrew into the wilderness in Arabia for ritual purification as a preparation for his future work. Whatever may be the reason for Paul's withdrawal into the wilderness of Arabia, whether he began his mission right there, which is unlikely, or it was a preparation, or for ritual purification, it is apparent that he began his active mission work only when he returned from Arabia.

To make sense of such puzzling records and contradicting accounts, i. e. Acts and Galatians, one needs to set them in their context. Different writers usually have different purposes and emphases in which each author stresses their own perspective in order to convey their message more convincingly. If we apply this to our present issue, it is possible to see that Paul in Galatians emphasises his theological debate with the circumcision party and tries to establish his equality with Peter and other apostles by claiming his independent mission and apostleship. It seems to be the reason why Paul states that he did not go up to Jerusalem to be ordained by the apostles there: his apostleship was rather directly from God. Gal. 1:1, cf. 1:17, 'nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me,....' That is to say that he visited Jerusalem from Damascus immediately following his conversion (Acts 9:26) but not for the purpose of receiving his commission as an apostle or of being instructed by the apostles. It is possible because Galatians was probably written not very long after the

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<sup>7</sup> B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, trans. E.J. Sharp, (Uppsala: ASNU, 1961), 289.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, 1992, 68.

Antioch incident<sup>9</sup> which ( the Antioch incident) we shall discuss shortly. In that Antioch incident since Paul failed to convince Peter and Barnabas, he felt it necessary to leave them and the church of Antioch, which consequently forced him to establish his independent mission for the legitimisation of his position and build upon his apostleship.

Another issue is that the Acts account makes a connection between Paul's stay in Tarsus and his time of commission in Antioch ( 11: 25-26;13:1-3) but his time in Arabia is entirely omitted in Acts as described earlier. In this narrative, Paul left Tarsus for his lengthy association with the church of Antioch at the initiative of Barnabas. Barnabas and Paul began their partnership in mission at a local level in Antioch, spending a whole year with the disciples there. In Galatians Paul did not mention how he began his relationship with the community in Antioch nor his partnership with Barnabas; his letter to the Galatians was mostly coloured by his theology of law and grace. However, we can see that the book of Acts emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit through the apostles in the life of the early church and stresses the accounts of significant historical events. Thus Acts misses out Paul's life in Arabia but records how Paul began his mission at Antioch; and the epistle to the Galatians stresses subjects such as Paul's apostleship, probably his ritual purification in Arabia in order to emphasise his godly life and devotion, and to support his position on the issues of circumcision and the law, but also to stress his independence of the

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<sup>9</sup> Taylor, 1992, 45. Burton, G.P. Richardson, Dunn, and R.N. Longenecker argue for an early date, see Burton, 1921, lii; G.P. Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Age*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 71; Dunn, 1990, 259; R.N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1990), lxxxiii. But the context of theological argumentation in Galatians gives much favour to a date not long after the incident at Antioch. Paul's theological agenda in Galatians is more or less the continuation of the debate at Antioch in that Paul was establishing his independent mission and trying to legitimate his apostleship for which he was defeated at the Antioch incident.

apostles. By this reading we may now reconstruct the early life of Paul in relation to his relationship with the church at Antioch: (1) after Paul's conversion he was with the disciples both in Damascus and Jerusalem which was consequently followed by the plot of the Jews to kill him. Nevertheless he escaped from the Jews and was able to take refuge in Tarsus (Acts 9: 19-30). (2) Then probably he withdrew into the wilderness of Arabia (Gal. 1:17) which Acts does not have at all. (3) When he returned from the Arabian desert he seems to have visited Damascus again (Gal. 1:17c). We do not have the evidence to construct a scene in which he visited Damascus directly on the way from his return from Arabia, or whether he came first to Tarsus-his birth place and then visited Damascus; it is an open question. We also lack evidence to state how Paul returned from Damascus to Tarsus at this time. (4) But Acts tells us that Barnabas took him from Tarsus to Antioch where they spent the whole year with the disciples who were called Christians for the first time in history (11:25-26). Probably when he returned from Arabia he retired for sometime to his place of origin, i.e. Tarsus, from which Barnabas (who introduced Paul at the first time to the disciples in Jerusalem soon after his conversion (Acts 9:27) took him to Antioch where they built their mission partnership. In this hypothesis of reconstruction of Paul's early life we do not suppose that Paul's first visit to Jerusalem soon after his conversion in Acts 9:26-29 was for the purpose of seeking confirmation of his apostleship from other apostles in Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 1:16b). This is to say that Paul visited Jerusalem in fact (Acts 9:26-30) but not for ordination to apostleship as he himself argues in Gal. 1:16b – 17. Other visits of Paul to Jerusalem may then have been for his missionary purpose since he indicates that those other visits took place after his return from Arabia (Gal. 1:18; 2:1). However, we are not concerned so much

with the question of what he did in Arabia, how his early visits to Damascus were scheduled; our purpose here is to bridge the life of Paul to his relationship with the church in Antioch. It should be sufficient now for our purpose in this section to accept the account in Acts 11:26 that Barnabas took Paul from Tarsus to Antioch and that it was through this that the relationship between Paul and the church in Antioch began to exist.

*(b) Paul in Antioch:*

Acts 11:26 indicates that Barnabas and Paul formed a firm partnership and they won the favour of the disciples at Antioch. Consequently the Antiochene church commissioned Barnabas and Paul and they sent them out to preach the gospel (Acts 13:2-4). Taylor states that Barnabas and Paul were sent out to preach the gospel which they taught and lived in Antioch, that is, a gospel of uncircumcision or a law-free gospel version; that was the commencement of Paul's outreach mission in c. 40 or 41 CE.<sup>10</sup> It gives the impression that Paul had found acceptance as a member of the church of Antioch; and his membership in the church of Antioch provided him with an identity, stability, and the social support of the church. However, Barnabas appears to be the leader of their outreach mission at this stage.

It is apparent that during that time James and Peter were the pillars in the Palestinian Christian communities, particularly in Jerusalem; and the Antiochene church was duly subordinated to the authority of the Jerusalem church while, on the other hand, exercising considerable independence of thought and practice. In this regard, the practice of the Antiochene church in relation to Gentile converts was to waive circumcision and other requirements of the ritual purity laws, particularly the



laws in relation to table-fellowship. This is seen clearly in the incident at Antioch where Paul defended the Gentile converts and confronted Peter (Gal. 2: 11-12), such that Bornkamm called Paul 'the apostle of Christianity without the Law to Antioch (Acts 11:26).'<sup>11</sup> E. Haenchen also states that it was Paul who was principally responsible for the decision to waive circumcision for the Gentile converts in Antioch.<sup>12</sup> Although Barnabas was pre-eminent among the leaders of the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1) and Paul was junior to Barnabas, he (Paul) obtained the favour of the believers to a certain degree and became an influential teacher (Acts 11:26, 13:1-3). As Barnabas and Paul were commissioned and sent out by the Antiochene church for outreach mission (Acts 13:3-4), they enthusiastically laboured and faithfully gave their mission reports back to the church (Acts 14:26-28). By this way of mission, Barnabas and Paul built up a strong relationship with the church at Antioch until the so-called 'Antioch incident.'

*(c) The Incident at Antioch:*

We have the personal testimony of Paul about the incident at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14) in which there is no intention to compromise, but in the account of the book of Acts there is a compromising decision (Acts 15:19-20, 23-29). This leads to scholarly dispute on the issue of the incident at Antioch, and the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15, in recent studies. It is a consensus that Acts' Apostolic Decree with the Jerusalem conference is anachronistic, a later formulation in the absence of Paul.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Taylor, 1992, 91, 93.

<sup>11</sup> G. Bornkamm, *Paul*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), 30; see also Lüdemann, 1989, 139.

<sup>12</sup> Haenchen, 1971, 370-72; cf. B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, (Lund: Gleerup, 1978), 63.

<sup>13</sup> Dunn, *JSNT* 18, 38; Taylor, 1992, 54; F. Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, trans. F. Clarke, (London: SCM Press, 1965), 83. On the other hand, Munck and Lüdemann argue that the incident at

Räisänen states, 'the naïve trust of a man's testimony about himself is a curious fundamentalistic survival within critical scholarship.'<sup>14</sup> Holmberg argues in favour of the historical reliability of Acts 15.<sup>15</sup> F.B. Watson challenged the plausibility of Paul's account.<sup>16</sup> The contradiction between the Antioch incident and the Jerusalem council is a crucial issue. It requires a historical reconstruction which may give us a clue. If we take Gal. 2:11-14 as giving a reasonably accurate account of the incident at Antioch, we see in Paul's statement that Barnabas also showed his allegiance to the circumcision party (Gal. 2:13b), leading to the break-down of the mission any partnership of Barnabas and Paul. If this is correct, then Paul and Barnabas would have not gone up together to Jerusalem to represent the Antiochene church as described by the Lukan source in Acts 15:2, because having been sent by the church to be the delegates would have meant that they were still in agreement about the gospel – the uncircumcision gospel at this point. Thus it gives the impression that the Jerusalem conference took place before the Antioch incident,<sup>17</sup> while Barnabas and Paul were still missionary team. This is reinforced by the account of Acts 15:1-2 'But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.' According to Acts, the teaching of some men from Judea on the

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Antioch preceded the Jerusalem conference, see Munck, 1959, 94-107; G. Lüdemann, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles*, trans. F. S. Jones, (London: SCM Press, 1984), 75.

<sup>14</sup> H. Räisänen, *The Torah and Christ*, (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Association, 1986), 232.

<sup>15</sup> B. Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 65.

<sup>16</sup> Watson, 1986, 53-6.

subject of circumcision is the cause for the conference of the two churches, Jerusalem and Antioch. As stated above, if the conference took place after the incident at Antioch, it is impossible to see Paul and Barnabas together on a delegation team. Meanwhile, the incident at Antioch was certainly caused by the teaching of certain men from James in Jerusalem as reported by Paul in Gal. 2:12. It is likely that there were two visits of the Judaeen teachers to the Antiochene church: before and after the Jerusalem conference. We do not know whether the teachers were the same people or different persons, it is an open question. This hypothesis would suggest that the first visit of the Judaeen teachers made the Jerusalem conference necessary, while the second visit caused the breaking-up of the missionary partnership of Paul and Barnabas and also caused a rift in the relationship between Paul and the church of Antioch. We will discuss the latter shortly.

In view of this we may now reconstruct the historical account of the Antioch incident and the Jerusalem conference: (1) while Barnabas and Paul were teaching and preaching the gospel of uncircumcision actively in Antioch, certain men came down from Judea and taught the gospel of circumcision to the believers in Antioch which necessitated the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15:-2). (2) The Jerusalem conference brought a certain degree of agreement (Acts 15:12-22). Perhaps Paul and Barnabas accepted the compromised four rules for Gentile Christians for the sake of the fellowship, *κοινωνία*, between Jerusalem and Antioch.<sup>18</sup> (3) Sooner or later it would have emerged that the controversial issue of circumcision and dietary laws for

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<sup>17</sup> Watson also shares the same opinion, see his work, Watson, 1986, 50-51. For a different interpretation see A.S. Geyser, 'Paul, the Apostolic Decree and the Liberals in Corinth', in *Studia Paulina*, J.N. Sevenster, and W.C. van Unnik eds., (Haarlem: Bohn, 1953), 124-38, especially 132.

table fellowship among the Christian-Jews in Palestine had not been resolved; on the contrary, it seemed to be more and more serious and caused James to send some men to Antioch to impose circumcision and certain dietary rules that were not agreed in the conference (cf. Gal. 2:12).<sup>19</sup> Consequently Paul confronted Peter at Antioch on account of his withdrawal from table-fellowship with Gentile converts and his intention to impose the Mosaic Law on all believers in the church regardless of their ethnic and cultural background.<sup>20</sup> (4) Now by the second visitation of the Judaeen teachers from Palestine the relationship between Paul and the church of Antioch, and the partnership of Barnabas and Paul broke down. Paul lost the companionship of other apostles and the support of the Antiochene church after the incident at Antioch that took place after the Jerusalem council according to our hypothesis in reconstructing the two historical events in Acts and Galatians.

In following the view that the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15 was made in the presence of Paul and Barnabas<sup>21</sup> it is likely that Paul modified his position at the conference for the sake of church unity, so long as the Gentile Christians were not required to be circumcised. But when the Judaeen teachers visited again the church at

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<sup>18</sup> This is a lively issue vigorously disputed in recent studies, we have earlier acknowledged the two views in terms of favour to Paul's personal testimony and on the other hand, the Lukan account in Acts in the preceding pages.

<sup>19</sup> F. C. Baur affirms the point by his argument that the Jerusalem apostles had sent the representatives to Antioch to impose the Law; see his work *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, trans. A. Menzies, (London: Williams & Norgate, 1878), 52. K. Holl adds that this was the authority claim of the Jerusalem church over the Antiochene church on their part to have oversight over their daughter church; see his work 'Der Kirchenbegriff des Paulus in seinem Verhältnis zu dem der Urgemeinde', in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, II, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1921), 57; cf. Taylor, 1992, 98. M. Hengel believes that the visit of the Judaeen teachers was also a symptom of the increasing legalism in the Jerusalem church and indicates a response to the pressure of the Jewish community, and accompanied by the ascendancy of James at the expense of Peter and other disciples of Jesus, see Hengel, 1979, 113.

<sup>20</sup> Burton argues that Paul avoided the crisis, see Burton, 1921, 72. But this view has not been accepted widely.

Antioch for the second time they imposed circumcision and certain rules strictly on the Gentile believers. Then Paul, nevertheless, was determined to stand firmly on his version of the free-gospel so that he exaggerated his position in saying, ‘...to them we did not yield submission even for a moment,...’ (Gal. 2:5a) although he had accepted the moderate decision at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15:12-20, 22). It seems to us that Paul started firmly maintaining his theology after the Antioch incident, but the same incident forced him into confrontation with Peter, representatives of James, and finally Barnabas. Had he done so, (i.e. holding firmly his theology right from the beginning of his mission) he would have not compromised his theology of law-free gospel at the Jerusalem council either. We believe, therefore, Paul stood firmly on his theology, only after the Antioch incident, not at the Jerusalem conference. This led him to form his independent mission after the incident at Antioch. However, our concern here is more with the consequences of the incident at Antioch, i. e. the effect on relationship between Paul and the church at Antioch rather than the historical account of the Jerusalem conference and the incident at Antioch. We shall now, therefore, turn our attention to the aftermath of the incident at Antioch.

*(d) The Aftermath of the Incident:*

Since Paul did not indicate that he gained any support from others in his confrontation with Peter (Gal. 2:11-14), it is apparent that Paul was quite clearly isolated in and through his confrontation, and he lost the support of the community and his association with Barnabas as well. This gives the impression that the church at

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<sup>21</sup> The two views, whether the Jerusalem conference was held before or after the incident at Antioch, and scholars who hold those views have been documented in this essay n. 13; we take the view that the conference preceded the incident at Antioch for this particular discussion.

Antioch recognized the authority of the Jerusalem church and accepted the views of teachers or visitors from Jerusalem. Despite the requirements they had abandoned, and the freedom of practice they had enjoyed for several years, they now submitted themselves to the requirements of the law under the auspices of the Jerusalem church.<sup>22</sup> The silence of Gentile Christians at the incident indicates that they willingly or unwillingly accepted the insertion of law observance by the Jerusalem teachers. There is no indication that anybody gave support to Paul at the time or subsequently, and the fact that Paul did not organize a separate Gentile church at Antioch gives the impression that both Jewish and Gentile Christian groups accepted the proposal of the teachers from Jerusalem. Silvanus and Titus might have been silent supporters of Paul, since they were with Paul in his missionary career after the incident, but Paul did not mention their support during the confrontation.<sup>23</sup> Paul failed to convince Peter and the Antiochene congregation and, consequently, he stood alone in his position; and on the other side, Peter, Barnabas, and the Antiochene community turned to the circumcision party (Gal. 2:11-13) and they submitted themselves to the Law. If our thesis is correct, this is the turning point of the Antiochene church which abandoned its freedom from the Law and became a law-observant tradition. This took place some time in the middle of the first century which indicates that, by the time of the composition of the Gospel of Matthew c. 85-90 CE,<sup>24</sup> the Antiochene church had very likely become a well established law-observant community.

Paul's failure to convince Peter, Barnabas, and the community at Antioch resulted in the breaking of his partnership with Barnabas and Peter, and losing the support of

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<sup>22</sup> See also Taylor, 1992, 99.

<sup>23</sup> Taylor, 1992, 135.

the church there at Antioch; moreover, consequently the active partnership between Paul and the church at Antioch came to an end.<sup>25</sup> Paul was accompanied by Silvanus and Timothy on his missionary tour to Corinth (2 Cor. 1:19; cf. Acts 18:5) which indicates that Paul's missionary tour to Corinth took place after the incident at Antioch when he had lost the association of Barnabas who supported Peter at the incident.<sup>26</sup> However, this does not mean that the breakdown of the relationship between Paul and the church at Antioch was permanent, that is to say, that Paul lost active partnership in mission with the Antiochene church. Later in the course of his missionary career Paul seemed to attempt reconciliation which we shall discuss shortly.

After the incident at Antioch, Paul was compelled to form his own independent mission. During the course of that independent missionary career he established some churches including the church at Corinth. Consequently he needed to legitimate his authority and mission, so he began to claim equality with Peter.<sup>27</sup> Paul had to establish his own mission and organized self-supporting missionary tours which occupied the rest of his life and mission work. Taylor says that for Paul, dependence on the Antiochene church was replaced entirely by dependence on God, and he derived his apostolic vocation directly from God. That vocation, he identified as the Gentile mission, directly authorised by God.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See this thesis, 83-95.

<sup>25</sup> Holmberg, 1978, 65; Brown and Meier, 1983, 39; R. J. Bauckham, 'Barnabas in Galatians,' *JSNT* 2 (1979), 61-70, especially 67; H. G. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, E.J. Epp and C. R. Matthews eds., trans. J. Limburg et al., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 123; see also Taylor, 1992, 139.

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, 1992, 55.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Holmberg, 1978, 18, 54-55, 64-65.

<sup>28</sup> Taylor, 1992, 102, 139; see also Betz, 1979, 85.

However, the breakdown in relationship between Paul and the church at Antioch seems to have been temporary.<sup>29</sup> In Acts 18:22 Paul's subsequent visit to Antioch is recorded. Taylor supposed that if Peter was still there in Antioch, which is possible, then Paul conceivably intended to be reconciled to Peter.<sup>30</sup> Conzelmann believes that Paul returned to Antioch to establish a contact with the church there<sup>31</sup> and G. Ogg even suggests that Paul retired to Antioch in ill-health.<sup>32</sup> Holmberg argues that for Paul a complete separation from the church of Jerusalem was 'theologically and sociologically impossible.'<sup>33</sup> In fact, we have the evidence of the third missionary journey of Paul in which he was actively involved in the collection for the Christians in Jerusalem. Although Paul did ask the church in Rome to pray for him that his service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints (Rom. 15:31), we do not have any evidence to say that the collection was rejected. Taylor believes that the delivery of the collection was scheduled c. 55 CE which was probably accepted and followed by Paul's arrest in 56 CE in Jerusalem and that his missionary work ended shortly thereafter. If this thesis is correct, it would then suggest that there was a healthy relationship of Paul with the church at Jerusalem before his mission finished. If it was impossible to have a complete and permanent break with the church of Jerusalem, it implies also the impossibility of an entirely permanent break with the church at Antioch as well, because the two churches were closely linked. Once Paul regained a healthy relationship with Jerusalem it would have been possible to further the relationship with the church at Antioch too, which is reflected in the Luke-Acts

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<sup>29</sup> See also Taylor, 1992, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Taylor, 1992, 182-3.

<sup>31</sup> H. G. Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity*, trans. J. E. Steely, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 90.



account of his return to Antioch (Acts 18:22). Haenchen and Conzelmann also suggest that Paul's visit to the Antiochene church was to restore a good relationship.<sup>34</sup>

In conclusion, it is fair enough to say that (1) there is no evidence that Paul had an effective relationship with the church of Jerusalem or the church of Antioch between the incident at Antioch and the delivery of the collection. (2) The collection and the delivery implies that the tension between Paul and the churches had significantly cooled down. The collection seems to signal a reconciliation between Paul and Peter, and with the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch. (3) However, there is no indication that Paul was subject to the authority of the church at Antioch. The collection of Paul for the Church of Jerusalem and the probability of reconciliation between Paul and Peter, stated above, gives the impression that the relationship was possibly restored in terms of overall Christian unity and fellowship, but missionary activities were probably carried out in different directions: a law-observant direction for James, Peter, Barnabas and a law-free direction for Paul and his new colleagues. The churches in Jerusalem and Antioch seemed to stand on the one side of law-observance, and the Pauline churches seemed to go with its law-free gospel version in a different direction. (4) Finally, the church of Antioch seemed to change its direction from a position of waiving the requirements for Gentile converts it began to impose those requirements on the church regardless of ethnic and cultural background which we shall discuss in the following sections and succeeding chapters.

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<sup>32</sup> G. Ogg, *The Chronology of the Life of Paul*, (London: Epworth Press, 1968), 131-2.

<sup>33</sup> Holmberg, 1978, 204.

#### 4. 1. 2 *Preliminary consideration in relation to the ethnic background of the*

##### *Matthean community*

To begin with, the latter part of the second Temple period is described by Shaye J. D. Cohen, as the age of sectarianism.<sup>35</sup> During this late second Temple period (from the rise of the Maccabees 160 BCE to the destruction of the Temple 70 CE) certain sects emerged; significantly (1) the Pharisees, (2) the Sadducees, (3) the Essenes, (4) the Qumran community, (5) the Christians, (6) the Sicarii, (7) the Zealots and others.<sup>36</sup> Among these different groups the Matthean community also came up as a Christian-Jewish sect; and along with these sects came a variety of sectarian texts with their own viewpoints such as apocalypses with varied speculations about God's control of human events, the nature of evil, and the secret of the end time. Moreover, their texts produced also the growth of the synagogue, liturgical prayer and scriptural study, the 'golden age' of Diaspora Judaism especially in Egypt which produced a rich literature in Greek seeking to package Jewish ideas in Hellenistic wrapping; and Judaism's intense interaction with its host culture.<sup>37</sup>

The destruction of the Temple in 70 CE made a radical change in the history of the Jews. The loss of national leadership in Jerusalem in 70 CE led to confusion and competition for Roman favour and authority. Many groups, including the surviving priests, Herodians, and a variety of others, were struggling for power.<sup>38</sup> In the late first century many social, religious, and political movements competed for influence and power among Jews in Palestine. Apocalyptic groups tried to raise the aspirations of

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<sup>34</sup> Haenchen, 1971, 548; Conzelmann, 1987, 156.

<sup>35</sup> Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1989), 17.

<sup>36</sup> Cohen, 1989, 17.

their own communities for reform to be ready for the decisive fulfilment of God's rule. At the same time the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem caused the Jews to separate over the Roman empire and became marginalized sects in different places. As we have mentioned above, the Jews split into many sects and competed each other for power, each group tried to reform Judaism in their own way of interpreting the Law. However, this reworking of Judaism by interpreting the Law became a re-affirmation of Jewish ethnicity under the power of the Romans for the fact that the Jews did not want to loss their ethnic identity and their religion which caused them to reform Judaism even after they had lost their political power in 70CE. It reflects the strong sense of ethnicity among the Jews under the Romans after the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 CE.

While a large variety of movements and sects emerged, alongside all these groups, Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah promoted their own versions of messianic teaching, based on the teachings of Jesus and interpreted in the light of their Jewish context and practice. The Matthean community is one of the Jewish groups who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and formed a community around Jesus and his teachings. Like other sects producing their own literature, the Matthean community also produced its text, a Gospel.

In quest of the answer for the question: were the members of the Matthean community Jews or Gentiles? we need to turn to the text and investigate the Life-Setting of the Matthean community from the evidence of the Gospel context. Anthony Saldarini begins his argument by his claim that the Gospel of Matthew was

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<sup>37</sup> Cohen, 1989, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 13.

made popular and widely read by second-century Christians and that it was they who preserved it as a Christian sacred writing.<sup>39</sup> For Saldarini, although the Gospel was most likely to have been written in the late first-century, it was neither widely read nor recognized as a Christian sacred writing until the second century. It is possible that Ignatius, by referring to the Gospel of Matthew in his epistles, made the Gospel popular in the second century. Saldarini states also the fact that in the first century many groups of believers in Jesus were integral parts of the Jewish community and not yet completely separated from Judaism. Furthermore, he supports his thesis by arguing that our modern views are often guided by the second-century interpretation of the Gospel rather than by what it originally meant in the context of the first century.<sup>40</sup> Benno Przybylski stresses that the Scripture and Jewish tradition such as Law, custom, culture, were seen and used by Christians as an attempt to synthesize the Jewish past with the Christian present, or to show how Christianity had replaced Israel.<sup>41</sup> Saldarini also argues that if the affirmations of Jewish Law and custom, the Jewish assumptions and modes of argument, and the frequent references to the Jewish milieu in the Gospel are investigated critically as teachings of the author, then a more Jewish author, Gospel, and audience are seen in the context.<sup>42</sup> While the Matthean community is believed to be a Christian-Jewish community by scholars like Saldarini, Sim, and Overman, on the one hand, other scholars like Stanton argue for

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<sup>39</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 11.

<sup>40</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 11. All scholars do not read the Gospel from the viewpoint of the second century Christians; Graham Stanton and others look closely to the context of the first century but still claim that the Matthean community was a Christian community completely parted from the Jewish parent body. For full discussion, see Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for A New People*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992). His work will be cited frequently in our next discussions.

<sup>41</sup> Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought*, SNTSMS 41, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 81.

<sup>42</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 11-12.

an open and full acceptance of Gentiles into the community.<sup>43</sup> In this thesis it will be argued that Matthew's congregation originally consisted of Jews by race but that subsequently Gentiles were also present in the community. Then we will pay special attention and interest to the question of group cohesion and ethnicity in the Matthean community. First of all, it is necessary to investigate the affirmations of Jewish Law and custom in Matthew to bring Matthew's Jewish audience into view.

#### **4. 1. 3 *Teaching on the Law in Relation to the Community's Ethnic Background***

The Law plays a very important role for Matthew and his community. Matthew establishes Jesus as the authoritative teacher of the Law and he (Matthew) defends his interpretation of the Law and Jewish customs by putting them into the mouth of Jesus. For Matthew the whole of the Mosaic Law is permanently valid (5.17-19). The disciples of Jesus are urged to exceed the righteousness of scribes and the Pharisees (5.20; cf. 6.1-18). Matthew emphasises very high moral requirements (5.20), expecting his audience to be perfect, (5.48; cf. 18.8-9; 19.11-12) and lays down strong internal discipline for his community (18.5-19). The emphasis on Jewish laws and purity<sup>44</sup> implies the Jewishness of the author and the audience.

For Matthew the Mosaic Law takes the central place in his Gospel as the theme which indicates the sectarian character of the evangelist's group.<sup>45</sup> The Jewish sects had their own interpretation of the Law which is often different from the parent bodies and that caused dispute between the sects and the parent bodies.<sup>46</sup> Such disputes

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<sup>43</sup> Stanton, 1992, 379.

<sup>44</sup> Purity and Food laws are dealt in this work, see 142- 8 and elsewhere.

<sup>45</sup> Sim, 1998, 123.

<sup>46</sup> Sim, 1998, 123.

reflect the situation of the Matthean community in relation to the position of the Law in the Gospel. The Matthean community accepted without question the validity of the Torah and attempted to observe it in its entirety (Mt. 5.17-19).<sup>47</sup> But the Matthean community's interpretation of Torah was different in many areas from the practice of the scribes and the Pharisees which caused one of the major areas of conflict between them.<sup>48</sup>

The interpretation of the Law by the Matthean community is seen in the words of the Matthean Jesus, 'Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.' (Mt. 5.17-19). For Matthew, Jesus did not come to abolish the Law and the prophets but to fulfil them. This text is the key text for Matthew in relation to the Law. The major discussion on this text centres on the meaning and relationship between the two temporal phrases, 'until heaven and earth pass away,' and 'until all is accomplished.'<sup>49</sup> John P. Meier argues that the second phrase is definite and reveals that the Law will come to an end during the ministry of Jesus.<sup>50</sup> Closely linked to the Pauline interpretation of the Law, Meier argues that this text depicts the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus as an apocalyptic event. This means that the Law is valid only until the resurrection which

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<sup>47</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 124-5.

<sup>48</sup> Sim, 1998, 123-4.

<sup>49</sup> Sim, 1998, 124.

made a turning point to a new era.<sup>51</sup> This interpretation contradicts the preceding verse 5.17, if Torah is valid only until the death of Jesus, then Jesus obviously abolished the Law by his death.<sup>52</sup> Luz, G. Barth, G. Bornkamm, and some other scholars view the phrase of ‘until heaven and earth pass away’ as a poetic saying to mean ‘never’ so that the Law is valid forever.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, another group of scholars: Davies, Allison, and Sim believe that the validity of the Law certainly has a limit and does not continue for eternity.<sup>54</sup> But unlike Meier, who thinks the validity of the Law is until the resurrection of Jesus, Davies and Allison, and Sim argue the validity of the Law in terms of eschatology and believe that the end time for Matthew is the parousia of Jesus and the eschatological event.<sup>55</sup> The evangelist has in mind that the eschatological event would see the passing away of the cosmic order and its replacement by a new and eternal order (cf. 19.28).<sup>56</sup> In the light of this interpretation we can see that for Matthew the Law is valid until the eschatological event,<sup>57</sup> and Jesus therefore, upholds the validity of it (the Law) until the end of the cosmic order (cf. 5.18); 24.34-35). Since, Torah is valid until the limited time of the

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<sup>50</sup> John P. Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel: A redactional study of Mt. 5:17-48*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 30-5.

<sup>51</sup> Meier, 1976, 61-5.

<sup>52</sup> Sim also shares the same idea, see Sim, 1998, 125.

<sup>53</sup> Luz, 1989, 266-7; G. Barth, ‘Matthew's Understanding of the Law’, in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, (London: SCM Press, 1963), 65.

<sup>54</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1*, 1988, 495; Sim, 1998, 125.

<sup>55</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew: 1*, 1988, 495; R. Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspectives*, *SNTSMS 48*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1984, 9; Hagner, 1993, 107; Sim, 1998, 125.

<sup>56</sup> Sim, 1998, 126.

<sup>57</sup> The apocalyptic eschatological teaching of Matthew seems to imply that Matthew and his community awaits for the eschatological event with rewards for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. For full discussion see, David Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially, 73-119; 244-249.

parousia and the eschatological event, the Matthean community is expected to observe it in full until that age of time (cf. 5.18).<sup>58</sup>

For Meier and some others who argue that the Law is valid only until the Easter event, the Matthean community did not need any longer to observe the Law because the community was formed after the Easter event. At that point the Law was fulfilled and ceased to be valid according to their interpretation. Others have a consensus that the Matthean community upheld the Law and observed it in its entirety until it was no longer valid for the community. The only dispute is over the duration of its validity which Davies and Allison and Sim believe to be until the eschatological event;<sup>59</sup> on the other hand, Luz, Barth, and Bornkamm argue for eternal validity of the Law.<sup>60</sup> Both groups of scholars agree that the Matthean community strictly observed the Law. It is enough for our purposes to see that Matthew and his group observed the Law in its entirety and this strongly implies the Jewishness of the audience. In other words, the strict observance of the Law inevitably reinforces the Jewish ethnic background of the Matthean community.

Another major point that brings to our attention an important question raised by the Pharisees is found in Mt. 22.34-40, relating to 'the greatest commandment in the law.' This text seems to be dependent on Mk. 12.28-34. These great commandments seem to sum up the whole Law in the commandment to love God taken from Deut. 6.5, and the commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself taken from Lev. 19.18<sup>61</sup>. E. Schweizer and T. L. Donaldson argue that only these two are valid and

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<sup>58</sup> Sim, 1998, 126.

<sup>59</sup> See above literature cited in note no. 55 of this chapter.

<sup>60</sup> See above note 53 of this chapter.

<sup>61</sup> Sim, 1998, 127.



they cover the whole Law and by obeying these two, men fulfil the entire Law.<sup>62</sup> They claim that Jesus annuls Torah and validates only these two commandments as the summary of the entire Law. Sim argues that this conclusion is extreme and hardly justified by the text.<sup>63</sup> Sim's comment on these two commandments is helpful to our thesis here. He says, 'the principle of summarising the entire Law under a fundamental statement is thoroughly Jewish'.<sup>64</sup>

The theological agenda here is whether the Matthean Jesus annuls the rest of the Law or not, but on the whole few would deny that the requirement of love in the Law is packaged in these two great commandments. Therefore, as Sim states, the summarising of the love commandment affirms the Jewishness of the author and his audience. The use of the Scripture (the Old Testament, Deut. 6.5 and Lev. 19.18) for this double love commandment also affirms the Jewish background of the community. Moreover, if we contrast the full acceptance of the Law (Mt. 5.1-19) and the description of sinner as Gentile (the lawless people) in Mt. 5.46-7; 6.7-8; cf. 18:17, the Matthean group is likely to be a Jewish community.

#### **4. 1. 4 *Teaching on Purity and Food Laws in Relation to the Community's***

##### ***Ethnic Background***

The teaching on purity and food laws in Mt.15.1-20 does not contain an explicit statement like that of Mark in Mk. 7.1-23 'Jesus declared all foods clean', and it seems that Matthew deliberately avoided it. Davies and Allison discuss a possibility that the

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<sup>62</sup> E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, (London: SCPK, 1976), 425; T. L. Donaldson, 'The Law that Hangs (Mt. 22:40): Rabbinic Formulation and Matthean Social World', in D. J. Lull ed., *Society of Biblical Literature 1990 Seminar Papers*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 17-18.

<sup>63</sup> Sim, 1998, 127.

Matthean version is more primitive than Mark in this particular text, but they argue against it.<sup>65</sup> It is probable that the Matthean account is closer to Jesus' teaching than the Marcan version,<sup>66</sup> for the possibility is that Mark revised and relaxed it for Gentiles, while Matthew brought it closer to Jewish tradition and was reluctant to make an explicit rejection of the food law for his largely Jewish community.

First of all, if we look at the pericope here more closely, it is an attack on Pharisaic tradition. In Matthew's understanding, this tradition of the elders (most probably the Pharisaic tradition) does not have the same authority as the Scripture, and when the tradition and the Scripture are in contrast, it must be judged by the Scripture and when necessary it must be condemned (cf. 15.1-9).<sup>67</sup> Secondly, it is also a direct attack on the Pharisees themselves, that their lives revealed hypocrisy and they cannot provide a good example for others so that the evangelist attacked them directly (vv. 12-14; cf. 16.5-12).<sup>68</sup> The third thrust concerns purity of life. For the evangelist what matters above all is the defilement effected by the human heart (vv.10f., 15-20).<sup>69</sup> Meier thinks of Mt. 15 as an abolition of Old Testament purity laws.<sup>70</sup> The answer of the Matthean Jesus, 'but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man' reveals the fact that the attack of the evangelist is not on the Jewish tradition nor on the purity laws but on the Pharisees and their paradosis.<sup>71</sup> It is very

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<sup>64</sup> Sim, 1998, 127. Hillel believes that this statement summarises the whole law and the rest is interpretation of it.

<sup>65</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 516-71.

<sup>66</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 526-531.

<sup>67</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 517.

<sup>68</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 517.

<sup>69</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 517.

<sup>70</sup> Meier does not explicitly say that Jesus abolished the purity laws but when he argues that the validity of the law is only until the resurrection of Jesus, it implies abolition of the law; cf. Davies and Allison, 1991, 517.

<sup>71</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 517.

likely that Matthew rejects it because the Pharisees had passed down (παρέδοσαν) to the people and added certain regulations which were not in the Mosaic Law originally (cf. Josephus, *Ant* 13.297). This reason for rejection of certain regulations is also the basis of Sadducean rejection of the Pharisees' interpretation of the Law. The Sadducees hold the view that only those regulations written down in the Mosaic Law should be considered and those handed down (παρέδοσαν) by the former generations need not be observed, (cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 13.297).<sup>72</sup>

If we investigate the background, washing of hands with water was not primarily hygienic.<sup>73</sup> In the discussion of Davies and Allison,<sup>74</sup> the primary purpose of handwashing was the cleansing from defilement and ritual impurity which was already practised by the people of Israel, (Exod. 30.17-21), and was rooted in the priestly instruction to wash hands and feet before going to the tent of meeting (cf. Lev. 15.11). It was not, however, a requirement before eating food at the primary stage. It is likely that the handwashing of the priests before eating consecrated food was adopted by the members of the Pharisaic party. The Pharisees then presumably developed that priestly ritualised practice even outside of the Temple. Even in the home the laws of ritual purity were applied at the table. This told Israel that one must eat secular food, that is the ordinary and everyday meals, in a state of ritual purity, as if one were a Temple priest. If this view of Pharisaic development is correct, the Pharisees developed the priestly ritual practice for themselves and tried to encourage this view for all Jews equally. By implication, the table of every Jew

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<sup>72</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 520.

<sup>73</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 521; See also Gen. 43.24; 2Kings 3.11; Jer. 2.22; Jn. 13.1-5; for further discussion see also L. E. Goodman, 'The Biblical Laws on Diet and Sex', in *Jewish Law Association Studies II*, ed. B. S. Jackson, (Atlanta, 1986), 17-57.

in his own home was viewed by the Pharisees as being like the table of the Lord in the Jerusalem Temple. The commandment: 'You shall be a kingdom of priests and holy people' was taken literally which implies everyone is a priest and stands in the same relationship to God in respect of keeping the priestly laws.<sup>75</sup>

In fact, it does not really seem to be scriptural but a traditional rule (Mt. 15:1-3; Mk. 7.11; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 10.51, tradition of the fathers Gal. 1.14, Josephus, *Ant.* 13.408). The tradition of the Pharisees was in fact a controversial issue before 70 CE which the Sadducees repudiated.<sup>76</sup> That controversy seems to be reflected in *IQH* 4.14-15 by the composers of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Essenes?) as in the words, '...to exchange the law engraved on my heart by Thee for the smooth things (which they speak) to Thy people'.<sup>77</sup> The seekers of smooth things in the Scrolls were the Pharisees.<sup>78</sup> If we compare Josephus, *Ant.* 17.41 with the note in the Loeb edition, the Pharisees pretend (προποιεῖν) to observe the laws of which God approves. But the accusation might be that the laws they do observe are of their own making.<sup>79</sup> Our conclusion here is that handwashing before meals is most likely Pharisaic tradition and not part of the Scriptural tradition so that Matthew rejects handwashing before meals as unscriptural and wants to stick to the Mosaic Law only. If our conclusion is correct, it may be right to say that Matthew conservatively upholds the Old

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<sup>74</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 521.

<sup>75</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 521; see also J. Neusner, *From Politics to Piety*, (Englewood Cliffs, 1973), 83.

<sup>76</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 520.

<sup>77</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 520.

<sup>78</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 520.

<sup>79</sup> A. I. Baumgarten, 'The Pharisaic Paradosis', *HTR* 80 (1987), 63-77; cf. Davies and Allison, 1991, 520. Laws in the Mishnah might well be little related to the written Torah because Mishnah is the product of the rabbinic period, see Davies, *JTS*, 10-14, 306-7.

Testament as a Jewish author and applies the Mosaic Law for his Jewish community in the light of Jesus' teaching as Christian-Jewish Community.

Sim presents his argument in a slightly different way. By comparing Mt. 15.1-20 with the Marcan parallel in Mk. 7.1-23 and through his detailed analysis of the Law based on Mt. 5.17-19, Sim confirms that Matthew's group strictly kept the dietary and purity laws of Judaism.<sup>80</sup> Davies and Allison argue that Matthew does not impose strict food and purity laws especially concerning handwashing. However, Sim points out that the Matthean Jesus was debating with the Pharisees and scribes over specifically Pharisaic ritual practice and not with the Jews or with Jewish tradition.<sup>81</sup> It is true that Matthew imposed strict rules of Judaism but in this particular polemic, as Davies and Allison argue, handwashing before meals seems to be most probably Pharisaic tradition and not primary Jewish ritualistic practice, so that Matthew does not take it seriously, rather he places his stress on moral attitude and the cleanliness of the human heart. For Davies and Allison, Matthew looks beyond the Pharisaic and scribal rules to the insight of the Mosaic Law. Davies and Allison seem to be nearest to the true intention of Matthew, which the Gospel texts themselves describe as the tradition of the elders (Mt. 15. 2-3; cf. Mk. 7.3b), and also the development of the Pharisaic and scribal rules points to that direction. It is very likely that Matthew agrees with strict adherence to the Mosaic Law as he sees it, but rejects what he considers Pharisaic and scribal rules. In the light of this conclusion, Matthew defends the Torah, the Jews, and Jewish tradition in his redactional work which reaffirms the Jewishness of the author and his audience.

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<sup>80</sup> Sim, 1998, 132.

<sup>81</sup> Sim, 1998, 133, 134-5.

Matthew's omission of the Marcan verse, 'Jesus declares all foods clean' (Mk. 7.19) in his redaction (Mt. 15.1-20) reveals the uncompromising opposition of Matthew and his community to lawless Gentile practice. It reaffirms their Christian Jewish heritage.<sup>82</sup> The evangelist and his community apparently observed the Jewish traditional distinctions between clean and unclean foodstuffs and would have avoided foods that were prohibited<sup>83</sup> but disputed what appear to be Pharisaic and scribal laws. If Matthew had rejected laws contained in the Mosaic Law or elsewhere in the Scriptures, then it would contradict Mt. 15.17-19 where he upholds the total validity of the Law. Thus, it is clear that Matthew considers handwashing as Pharisaic tradition and rejects it, and is always inclined to stick to the Mosaic Law for his Jewish community and interprets them in the light of Jesus' teaching as believers in Jesus. This reinforces the Jewish ethnic background of Matthew's community. Moreover, Matthew's omission of the Marcan verse, Mk. 7.3a '...all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands,' indicates his defence of his Jewish congregation and a reluctance to embarrass his audience which again reinforces the Jewishness of the Matthean community.

Mark writes that Jesus declares all foods are clean (Mk. 7.19), and denies the validity of purity and food laws, a view which likely prevailed in his Christian community. Matthew treats handwashing more seriously than Mark. Matthew's understanding of the handwashing and purity laws supports his intention of upholding the Jewish custom and tradition while reforming Judaism. The debate

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<sup>82</sup> Sim, 1998, 134.

<sup>83</sup> Sim, 1998, 134, see also Mohrlang, 1984, 11; Saldarini, 1994, 141; Hagner, 1995, 433; J. A. Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew*, TNTIC; (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International), 1996, 226; Davies and Allison, 1991, 537-8.

between Jesus and the Pharisees over meals and purity laws presented by Matthew is sharp in Mt. 15.13 where Jesus says that anything which is not rooted with God will be uprooted. Matthew seems to divert his focus to moral attitudes and behaviours which makes the purity and food laws less important (15.17-20), but nevertheless he still puts them in a secure position. These purity and food laws are in fact maintained by Matthew only (Mt. 15.2, cf. Mk. 7.3-23); which Matthew upholds more than any of the other Gospels. It is therefore, most probable that the author and the audience of the Matthean Gospel were Jews who upheld their traditions and customs.

#### **4. 1. 5 *Teaching on Sabbath Law and Sabbath Observance in Relation to the Community's Ethnic Background***

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus twice had controversy with the Pharisees over the specific issue of Sabbath observance. The first occasion occurs when they dispute over whether the disciples can pick ears of the grain to satisfy their hunger (Mt. 12:1-8), and another occasion over whether Jesus may cure a man on the Sabbath (12:9-14). Matthew's interpretation of Marcan source material is interesting in relation to these Sabbath observances and the dispute over food laws. In his disagreement with the Jewish leaders on Sabbath observance Matthew interprets the Sabbath law in the light of mercy, probably taking from Hos. 6.6<sup>84</sup> (cf. Mt.12.7), and the authority of Jesus over the Sabbath, (Mt. 12.8). Nevertheless, Matthew does not minimize the importance of Sabbath, instead he reaffirms that the Sabbath is to be respected and observed as far as circumstance allowed (Mt. 24.20).

The second dispute of Jesus with the Jewish leaders and the Pharisees in Matthew's Gospel is over whether it is permissible to heal on the Sabbath. Mark's question is, 'Is it permitted on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?' (Mk. 3.4). The critical issue here is whether healing is to be defined as work that should be put off until the next day after the Sabbath. Matthew argues from the point of human need and mercy by a phrase, 'Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath' (Mt. 12.12).<sup>85</sup> Matthew defends Jesus' action on the Sabbath by interpreting the Law for his community on the basis of doing good and acting mercifully on the Sabbath in a self-conscious and deliberate way. By portraying Jesus as Lord of Sabbath Matthew interprets Jesus' teaching and action on the Sabbath for his community. That is, he upholds Jewish Sabbath tradition while balancing it against the need to show mercy and humanity. In both these disputes on the Sabbath law and observance we see Matthew's tendency for his community to uphold Jewish custom and tradition while caring for the sick and the hungry in their community. This would seem to affirm the Jewishness of the audience.

Matthew expresses his intention for his community by his redaction of the Marcan source material. Mark, writing, we assume, for a Gentile community, speaks the apocalyptic discourse that the disciples are urged to pray that their flight does not occur in winter (Mk. 13.18). The concern for Sabbath is totally missing in the Marcan version, while Matthew adds that they should pray that it does not take place on a

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<sup>84</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 131.

<sup>85</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 131.



Sabbath as well.<sup>86</sup> This indicates that the author himself is a conservative Jewish Christian<sup>87</sup> who imposed Sabbath observance. It also appears obviously once we deduce that the Matthean community is a law-observant sect, then it is quite possible to assume that they would have observed the Sabbath for it is explicitly spelled out in the ten commandment of Moses. As we have stated that Matthew added Sabbath observance (Mt.24.20) to the Marcan version (Mk.13.18) for his community, this strongly indicates the Jewish ethnic identity of the group which upholds the Mosaic Law and observes the Sabbath<sup>88</sup> as their inherited Jewish tradition.

#### **4. 1. 6 *Circumcision in Relation to the Community's Ethnic Background***

Circumcision is one of the most significant marks of Jewish ethnic identity and it is a strict requirement for every Jewish male to be circumcised.<sup>89</sup> In most cases Gentile converts were also circumcised for full membership to the community in Judaism. Riches states that the presence of Gentiles from an early stage raised questions of identity.<sup>90</sup> The custom was so rooted in Jewish practice that in a purely Jewish community circumcision would not have raised discussion; it became a crucial issue only when they (the Jews) were mixed with Gentiles.

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<sup>86</sup> Sim, 1998, 138.

<sup>87</sup> Stanton, 1992, 192-3.

<sup>88</sup> There are scholars who deny that the Matthean community necessarily observed the Sabbath. See Stanton, 1992, 205-206. Stanton argues that Mt. 24.20 does not necessarily indicate Sabbath observance by the Matthean community. For Stanton, Matthew urged his group against fleeing on the Sabbath because it would add to the community's persecution from the Jewish people and, therefore, the issue does not necessarily mean the group observed the Sabbath. Stanton's interpretation has been convincingly rebutted by K. C. Wong in his essay, 'The Matthaean Understanding of the Sabbath: A Response to G. N. Stanton', *JSNT* 44 (1991), 3-18.

<sup>89</sup> In chapter two of our work here we have dealt with circumcision as an identity marker of the Jewish people at the turn of the Christian era, see 69-72.

<sup>90</sup> Riches, 2000, 3.

In the Gospel of Matthew circumcision does not appear to be a crucial problem. Some scholars believe that circumcision was no longer required for Gentile converts, as influenced by the Pauline law-free Gospel mission. But this hypothesis is very unlikely because by the time of the composition of the Gospel, the influence of the Pauline law-free Gospel did not seem to be significant. Most scholars agree that Paul lost the battle at Antioch;<sup>91</sup> he then left Antioch and started a new mission. Meier's work gives us a view that the Antiochene church underwent different stages and theological trends in different generations. The first Christian generation of the Antiochene church (40 – 70 CE) saw the primitive age of the church and experienced theological controversy between law-free and the law-observant Christians particularly on the issues of purity and food laws, and circumcision. The second Christian generation in Antiochene church (70 – 100) was the Matthean law-observant community<sup>92</sup> which gives the impression that the Matthean community (the second Christian generation) did practise circumcision as law-observant Christians.<sup>93</sup> There is no reason to doubt the practice of circumcision by the Jews in Matthew's community once one has concluded it as a law-observant Christian Jewish congregation. But on the other hand, for some scholars, the silence on circumcision in Matthew's Gospel suggests that they did not expect its male Gentile converts to undergo this ritual practice of circumcision.<sup>94</sup> The only question is how did the

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<sup>91</sup> N. Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity*, JSNTSS, 66; (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 137 and other literature cited there.

<sup>92</sup> Brown and Meier, 1983, 28-72. The argument of the Matthean community as law-observant church is a widely accepted view as the text explicitly presents the community's position in relation to the law, see Mt. 5.17-19 and we have argued it here in our work above, see 138-150, also 130-4.

<sup>93</sup> Any conclusion that holds the view the Matthean community as law observant Jewish community would obviously and inevitably mean that circumcision is practised at least for all the male Jews.

<sup>94</sup> See Sim, 1996, 185. The issue of circumcision in the Gospel will be dealt more detailed in the succeeding sections of this thesis, see 155-63.

group admit their Gentile converts? Sim, Mohrlang, A.-J. Levine, and L. M. White hold the view that even in the mission mandate in 28.18-20, the command to teach all that Jesus commanded (28:18-20) includes circumcision and they consider that even the Gentile converts were required to undergo the circumcision ritual operation.<sup>95</sup> If Gentile converts were required to be circumcised, then it is sure that the Jews in the community also underwent the ritual operation of circumcision. It is enough for our purpose in this section to see that circumcision was practised at least by the Jews in the community which reinforces the fact that Matthew's group has come from a Jewish ethnic background and had Jewish roots in their Life-Setting.<sup>96</sup>

#### 4. 1. 7 *The Presence of Gentiles in the Matthean Community*

Gentiles appeared to be attracted by Jesus, but within a Jewish context they (the Gentiles) were marginalised sociologically. Evidence shows the attraction of Gentiles, for example, the healing of the daughter of the Canaanite woman (Mt. 15.22-28), the healing of the servant of the centurion (Mt. 8.5-13) and others. The conversation between the Canaanite woman and Jesus in this pericope reflects the fact that the woman was desperate for Jesus' healing for her daughter. The woman's attitude towards Jesus and her total submission is indicated by her response to Jesus.

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<sup>95</sup> Sim, 1996, 193; Mohrlang, 1984, 44-5; A.-J. Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles...'* (Matt. 10.5b), SBEC, 14, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 178-85; L. M. White, 'Crisis Management and Boundary Maintenance: The Social Location of the Matthean Community,' in Balch, *Social History*, 241-2, n. 100.

<sup>96</sup> By saying that the majority of the Matthean community is likely to be from Jewish ethnic background, we do not ignore the presence of Gentiles. There were Gentiles in fact but the silence of circumcision in Matthew's Gospel leads to questions whether the new Gentile converts were required to undergo that ritual operation or whether they were admitted to the community by baptism (cf. Mt. 28.18-20). But this does not lessen the possibility of the dominant and majority members' Jewish ethnic background. Moreover, the issue on circumcision in the First Gospel is dealt in the following sections of this thesis, see 155-63.

Jesus' rejoinder to the woman's plight seems to suggest Jesus' acceptance of the woman. It is therefore, presumed that the Canaanite woman would probably follow Jesus after her daughter was healed and was likely to be admitted to the community of Matthew. In the narrative of the healing of the centurion's servant, Jesus portrayed the faith of the centurion by exclaiming that he did not find such faith even in Israel; and explicitly declared his acceptance of the centurion by adding that many will come from east and west (which suggests the inclusion of uncircumcised Gentiles) and they will sit together with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the table in the kingdom, (Mt. 8. 11). Riches states that 'admission of Gentiles to the Christian *ecclesiae* without circumcision was the surest sign that these new groups were not Jewish,'<sup>97</sup> that is, they (the uncircumcised) did not come from a Jewish ethnic background.

Meier states that from the beginning the Antioch church was a Hellenistic church (Greek-speaking Jews)) with some Gentile members.<sup>98</sup> Paul's letter to the Galatians and Luke-Acts present the fact that the Antiochene church contained uncircumcised (Gentile) members at the early stage and that they joined the table fellowship was reported even to the church in Jerusalem<sup>99</sup> (cf. Gal. 2; Acts. 11-15). Sim's discussion of different opinions on the issue of admission of the Gentiles to the Matthean community affirms the emergence of a Gentile group. Some scholars argue that the Matthean church did not expect its Gentile converts (male) to go through the ritual

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<sup>97</sup> Riches, 2000, 3. This statement of Riches on the point of Gentile admission without circumcision will be argued against in the immediate following sections, but it is supportive at this point that he states the presence of Gentiles in Matthew's community.

<sup>98</sup> Meier, 1976, 9.

<sup>99</sup> Riches, 2000, 3.

operation of circumcision.<sup>100</sup> W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison also argue that Matthew intended Jewish Christians to keep the Law (5. 17-19), but exempted Gentile converts from this requirement, particularly circumcision which is seemingly substituted by baptism for Gentile converts.<sup>101</sup> Luz proposed a similar view that Matthew distinguished the many steps and demands of the Mosaic Law and placed Jews and Gentiles on different levels. The demand of circumcision, not improbably was dispensed with for Gentile converts.<sup>102</sup> Saldarini also has the idea that the Matthean community might have waived this ritual requirement (circumcision) for its male Gentile converts in favour of baptism.<sup>103</sup> At this point our argument is not on the issue of circumcision but on the presence of Gentiles in the Matthean community. Different scholarly arguments for the exemption of male Gentile converts from circumcision affirm the presence of Gentiles in the Matthean community. Meier was convinced that the Antiochene church was most probably heavily Jewish in origin, but it was becoming increasingly Gentile as the first century drew to a close.<sup>104</sup>

A major problem with these views of the requirement or, for exemption from circumcision for male Gentile converts is that the Matthean Jesus stipulates obedience of the whole Law with all its requirements; no matter whether a person is born a Jew or Gentile, he or she must obey the whole Law (5.17-19). It is reinforced by the text in 18.15-17 that depicts forgiveness within the Matthean community. The episode is concluded with the statement that the wrong doer, if he or she does not

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<sup>100</sup> Sim, 1996, 185. This is not Sim's view, only his discussion on others' view is taken here for discussion.

<sup>101</sup> Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1988, 492-3.

<sup>102</sup> Luz, 1989, 86.

repent, is to be treated as a Gentile and a tax-collector (cf. 5.46-7; 6.7-8, 32). Many scholars see and stress the point of the expulsion of the offender from the community.<sup>105</sup> Sim, on the other hand, sees that they fail to make the right inference. He argues that from the similar treatment of the unrepentant sinner with Gentiles and tax-collectors must be deduced that Gentiles *per se* were not a part of the Matthean church. This does not mean that there were no people of Gentile ethnic origin in the Matthean church; rather it means that he (Matthew) no longer considered them to be Gentiles but accepted them as Jews in his community. Then as the ethnic Jews were expected to avoid contact with the Gentile world, so the Gentile converts too were supposed to avoid with the sinful world.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, the texts in 5.17-19 and 18.15-17 do not imply exclusion of Gentiles from the Matthean community, but express community concepts of unity and united expectation regardless of the ethnic background of believers.

#### 4. 1. 8 *The Issue of Circumcision in Matthew's Gospel*

The complete silence on circumcision in the Gospel of Matthew makes it a very difficult task to solve that problematic issue satisfactorily, or to achieve a consensus among scholars. Saldarini makes two points, (1) circumcision was not a central theme of all Jewish writers, but keeping all other laws and commandment was considered laudable and important; (2) the Gentiles in Matthew's group might have

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<sup>103</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 156-60.

<sup>104</sup> Meier, 1976, 8.

<sup>105</sup> Forkman, 1972, 124-32. Cf. also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1991, 785; Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 103-4, and Meier, 1983, 68-9.

<sup>106</sup> Sim, 1996, 190.

been admitted on the same basis, not requiring circumcision as initial requirement. Some may have been circumcised and some not. The relationship of each member with God in faith through Jesus was the central focus of their commitment.<sup>107</sup> Davies and Allison believe that Matthew expected his Jewish Christians to observe and fulfil the Law as indicated by Mt. 5:17-19 but Gentile converts might be exempted as in Mt. 28:16-20.<sup>108</sup> They restate and claim more precisely that Gentile Christians are unlikely to have observed all the laws of Judaism, but would have kept a minimum number of Old Testament commandments for the sake of fellowship with the Jews. U. Luz considers that the Gentile converts were probably exempted from certain parts of the Law or even from complete requirements of the Law. He suggests, particularly on the basis of 5:17-19, that Matthew affirms the validity of the whole Law. For Luz, Matthew is a 'Jesus person' law-observer, but not a Pharisee. This is to say that, even though the ritual law and the law of circumcision was valid for him, this is not the important feature that he (Matthew) stresses in his community rule. So Luz observes a distinction between the 'love commandment,' and the Decalogue and the moral law (Mt.23:23), and the peripheral ceremonial laws including purity commandments, Sabbath, and circumcision.<sup>109</sup> For him the moral laws are more important and the cultic and ritual requirements (including circumcision) are of lesser importance and may have been dispensed with for Gentile converts.

K. C. Wong plainly proposes that the requirement of strict observance of the Law demanded in 5:17-20 would have applied only to Jewish Christians while Gentile

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<sup>107</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 160.

<sup>108</sup> Davies and Allison, 1988, 492-3; see also Sim, 1998, 252.

<sup>109</sup> Luz, 1990, 86.

converts would have been required only to observe the Golden Rule ( 7:12).<sup>110</sup> There is also a group of scholars who argue that the Matthean Gentiles were not subject to upholding the Torah.<sup>111</sup> Saldarini is also in favour of the hypothesis that circumcision is not a requirement for Gentile converts for their entry into Matthew's group.<sup>112</sup>

Sim, on the other hand, vigorously argues that scholars focused onesidedly on the ritual practice of baptism and failed to investigate critically other requirements of the risen Lord in the mission charge (Mt. 28:18-20). Sim takes the command to obey everything that Jesus taught, as one in which all parts of the Law are inevitably necessarily included.<sup>113</sup> Firstly the basic ground of the argument between Sim and the other group of scholars (mentioned above) lies in the interpretation and application of the Law observance saying in Mt. 5:17-20 and 23:23. Sim reads these texts for the entire community of Matthew and interprets them inclusively as referring to all the laws, both ritual and moral. The other group of scholars takes this text to apply to the whole community, but the ritual laws (including circumcision) apply only to Jews by birth. Sim reads the text 5:17-19 as applying universally and argues that making any distinction between Jews and Gentiles would be contrary to 5:18 which condemns anyone teaching others to relax any of the commandments.

Secondly, the dispute between Sim and others on the issue of circumcision depends on the differing viewpoints of the Matthean group's mission field. Sim holds the view that the Matthean community was not involved in Gentile mission but solely

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<sup>110</sup> Wong, 1992, 36-55. The English translation of this quotation is taken from Sim, 1998, 252.

<sup>111</sup> R. T. France, 1989, 234-5; Davies and Allison, 1988, 493; Hagner, 1985, 255; Saldarini, 1994, 157; Donaldson, 1990, 14-33.

<sup>112</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 156-60.

<sup>113</sup> Sim, 1998, 252-3.



in mission to the Jews.<sup>114</sup> In the light of 'mission to the Jews only', Sim concludes that if such a restriction was applied, i.e. that Christian Jews were to offer the Gospel to the Jews only, giving a command to circumcise would be simply superfluous; any converted males would be Jews and they would have been circumcised already.<sup>115</sup> Sim offers another point of argument. The requirement for admission to the Matthean church is becoming a Jew by conversion to Judaism, that is to say only Jews are qualified to be followers of the Matthean Jesus. This means that a Gentile has to be Judaized by circumcision and other requirements as the first and initial step in joining the Matthean sectarian group.<sup>116</sup> In this viewpoint of Sim, the male members of Matthew's group were already proselytized by circumcision, therefore, no further instruction to be circumcised was necessary.<sup>117</sup> Davies and Allison note Mt. 15:1-20 in which the handwashing is omitted. They suppose that because Matthew's largely Jewish community already knew the facts, therefore, it was not necessary to instruct them about handwashing.<sup>118</sup> They suggest that if this hypothesis is correct, then presumably the largely Jewish congregation of Matthew did practise the ritual requirement of circumcision which is their inherited Jewish tradition as descendants of Abraham. Riches argues that,

It is surely right that, if Matthew saw the members of his community as Christian *Jews*, he would have insisted on maintaining one of the key markers of Jewish identity. One only has to consider a text like *Jub* 15.26, 'Anyone who is born whose own flesh is not circumcised on the eighth day is not from the sons of the

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<sup>114</sup> Sim, 1998, 253.

<sup>115</sup> Sim, 1998, 253.

<sup>116</sup> Sim, 1998, 253.

<sup>117</sup> Sim illustrates by pointing to the fact that proselytes were counted among the members in Qumran community (*CD* 14.4-6), yet it says nothing about circumcision since the proselytes would have already been circumcised (cf. *1QS* 6.13-23). It applied that proselytes were circumcised before they become full members of Qumran community which would apply to Matthean community rules, see Sim, 1998, 253-4.

<sup>118</sup> Davies and Allison, 1991, 518.

covenant which the Lord made for Abraham since he is from the children of destruction', to see how extraordinary it would have been for a Christian Jewish *sect* to have dropped the requirement of circumcision for any but the most unusual and exceptional cases, if at all.<sup>119</sup>

Riches further argues that in Mt.28:19 the text speaks only of baptizing those who are converted to the discipleship of Jesus, and no requirement of circumcision is spelled out there, nor any counter-argument. In many respects we see similarities here between Matthew's Christians and the Qumran community in that the Qumran documents did not discuss circumcision as the initial rite for membership. The most probable reason is that it is assumed that they (the Qumran Community) practised circumcision, and the Gentile male proselytes were already circumcised as they would have gone through the steps of their conversion to Judaism.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, circumcision is not an issue between Matthew and Jamnia. Riches argues that if Matthew's group were concerned enough to have to make circumcision a sign of the covenant, they would have then surely been concerned with matters of physical descent which plays a central and interlocking part in the promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:2; 15:5; 17:1-14; 22:17-18).<sup>121</sup> Sim again argues that had the Matthean community waived this most Jewish of practices for its Gentile converts, then he would have to have included some justification of that position in those passages which deal with the community conflict with formative Judaism.<sup>122</sup>

After all, there is not a single text that talks about circumcision in Matthew's Gospel; all our arguments depend on suppositions. Considering both sides of the

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<sup>119</sup> Riches, 2000, 215.

<sup>120</sup> Sim, 1998, 254.

<sup>121</sup> Riches, 2000, 217, 225.

<sup>122</sup> Sim, 1998, 254, also n. 89.

argument critically, I would like to argue that if circumcision had not been practised in Matthew's community, then it is most probable that their opponents, particularly the Pharisees and the scribes, who pretended to be the most strict law-observers and appeared to be quite fierce opponents of the Matthean Jesus and his disciples, would have criticised Jesus and his disciples for (1) not practising circumcision of the Jews in the community of Matthew, and (2) if they admitted Gentiles without circumcising them, the opponents would have attacked them for admitting the uncircumcised Gentiles into their community. One should consider the importance of the ethnic boundary between clean and unclean (Jews and Gentiles), such that the two groups did not share even meals at a table and ask himself or herself: could these two ethnic groups, circumcised and the uncircumcised who did not share even meals, live together so closely in a single community? And Matthew, as the exponent of the group would have given answers to the attacks and provided justification for the uncircumcised group members if he really admitted uncircumcised Gentiles into his own community. For instance, the opponents of Jesus and his disciples (the Pharisees and the scribes) vigorously attacked Jesus and his disciples on the issue of Sabbath observance (Mt. 12:1-8; 9-14; Mk. 3:1-6); in all of these circumstances the opponents attacked and the author of the Gospel provided justifications on each point. But there is no attack on the issue of circumcision, nor justification provided by Matthew for any Jew or Gentile not having been circumcised. Therefore, the silence on circumcision in Matthew's Gospel makes it very likely that every male in the community, both Jew and Gentile, had undergone the ritual practice of circumcision so that the opponents had no ground to attack on this subject and the evangelist did not need to provide his justification for not circumcising his Gentile male converts.

Again, it is our argument that the departure of Paul from Antioch following the incident was a significant turning point in practice from uncircumcision (cf. Acts 21: 17-26) to circumcision in the history of the Antiochene church.

#### **4. 1. 9 Conclusion**

The picture of the Matthean community's ethnic background we discuss is an intriguing one. The teaching on the Law in the text indicates that the Matthean community is a strictly law-observant community, and our investigation of the purity and food laws suggests that Matthew comes from a Jewish background and keeps the tradition of Judaism or the Scripture, but rejects the Pharisaic and scribal rules. Nevertheless he interprets the tradition of Judaism and Scripture in the light of Jesus' teaching which furthermore indicates that the community was a Christian Jewish Community. Our analysis of the Sabbath law and the observance of the Matthean community strongly suggests that this group has come from a Jewish background which observes the Sabbath sensitively, however, they observe it in the light of Jesus' teachings. When we examine circumcision in the Life-Setting of Matthew's community, the majority of Matthean specialists agree that the Jews by birth in Matthew's church practised circumcision and the only open question is the admission of Gentile converts into the community; and the practice of circumcision by the members (Jews) is a clear mark of their Jewish ethnic background and the label of their Jewish ethnic identity. Therefore, these central images and motifs firstly suggest that the Matthean community had come from a strong Jewish ethnic background which kept their Jewish tradition and customs faithfully and interpreted them in the light of Jesus' life and teaching as a new religious sect within Judaism.

Secondly, evidence affirms the presence of Gentiles within the Matthean community and subsequently affirms the emergence of a new community from two different ethnic origins as a new kinsfolk of God, not of blood ties and kinship but of religious bonds. This, by implication, gives the picture of a majority against a minority relationship within the community. The central question of this research work to which we have now come is: how did the Jewish majority treat the Gentile minority in the Matthean community and what was the re-action of the minority people in their group cohesion? This is not to say that there were two groups within the Matthean community, but to raise the question of any racial discrimination or marginalization within that one group of the Matthean church. In other words, this is to ask: Was there sectarianism and group conflict within the Matthean community caused by their differing ethnic backgrounds and cultures? By what principles did Matthew try to maintain cohesion within his group? These issues will be discussed in the succeeding chapters.

Thirdly, we have argued that the Matthean community very likely practised circumcision for all male members (both Jews and Gentiles) in the church which implies the uncompromising Jewishness of Matthew and his group in the late first century. Finally we conclude here that the Matthean community was a multicultural group of different ethnic origins (Jews and Gentiles). The Jews appeared to be largely in the majority, with the Gentiles a tiny minority in their community; the influence of Jewish culture appeared to be dominant in their community Life-Setting. This is underpinned by the emergence of a new community as the people of God from two different ethnic origins - not of blood ties and kinship but forced by a religious bond.

## **4. 2. A Critical Study of the Relationship between the Matthean Community and the Parent Body**

### **4.2.1 *Introduction:***

It is necessary to study the relationship between the Matthean community and the main Jewish community from a sociological ethnic perspective in order that we may have deeper understanding of the Matthean community's position in the Graeco-Roman society of the time, to know who were responsible for any ethnic issues in the life of the Matthean community (i.e. Matthew if the group separated, or the leaders of the main community), and also to perceive elements of ethnicity from the reflection of the relationship between the two communities.

Despite a variety of disputes among scholars on relationship between the Matthean community and the parent body, there are two main viewpoints currently debated in Matthean scholarship. J. Andrew Overman, Anthony J. Saldarini, and David C. Sim argue that Matthew and his group had not parted from Judaism. On the other hand, Graham N. Stanton vigorously argues that the Matthean community had already separated from its parent body and formed a new people gathered around Jesus as a Christian church. In this section we will give particular attention to this issue and critically examine the arguments of the two viewpoints.

Studying the conflicts between Matthew's group and the dominant Jewish community will reveal how they view each other and maintain their life. Where is Matthew's community to be located in the society of their time? A large part of the text indicates conflict between the Matthean community and some Jews in regard to

Judaism and religious practice. This opposition and conflict have led some scholars to assume that the Matthean community has left the Jewish community (parent body) and set up a completely separate community known as 'Christians'<sup>123</sup> (cf. Acts 11.26, 'the disciples were for the first time called Christians' according to Luke-Acts account). On the other hand, a number of scholars vigorously argue that Matthew's community was still within Judaism, and the conflicts were inner Jewish conflicts only.<sup>124</sup> We will critically examine both texts and terms in order to assess the relationship between Matthew's community and the main Jewish parent body.

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<sup>123</sup> Stanton is a prominent scholar who vigorously argues for separation of Matthew's group, see his works *A Gospel for A New People*, 1992; 'The Origin and Purpose of Matthew's Gospel: Matthean Scholarship from 1945-1980', *ANRW* II, 25.3, (1985) 1889-1951. There are other scholars too who hold similar views, see W. A. Meeks, 'Breaking Away: Three New Testament Pictures of Christianity's Separation from the Jewish Communities', in J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs eds., *To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, Others in Late Antiquity*, (Chicago: Scholars Press, 1985) 93-116; S. Freyne, 'Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self: Matthew's and John's Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus', in Neusner and Frerichs eds., *To See Ourselves*, 1985, 117-44; B. Przybylski, 'The Setting of Matthean Anti-Judaism', in P. Richardson and O. Grankou eds., *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, vol. I, (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier, 1988), 181-200; D. A. Hagner, 'The *Sitz im Leben* of the Gospel of Matthew', in K. H. Richards ed., *Society of Biblical Literature 1985 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 243-69, also in *Matthew*, 2 vols., WBC 33A and 33B, (Dallas: Word Books, 1993, 1995), I, 1xv-1xxi; Luz, 1990, I, 70-2, and also in 'Der Antijudaismus im Matthäusevangelium als historisches und theologisches Problem. Ein Skizze', *EvT* 53 (1993), 310-27; K. G. C. Newport, *The Sources and Sitz im Leben of Matthew* 23, JSNTSS 117, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 61-7. Saldarini also describes the issue but this is not his view, see for his discussion, Saldarini, 1994, 11-43.

<sup>124</sup> Overman, 1990; and also his work 'Heroes and Villains in Palestinian Lore: Matthew's Use of traditional Jewish Polemic in the Passion Narrative', in D. J. Lull ed., *Society of Biblical Literature*

#### 4.2.2 *A critical study of 21.43 in relation to the relationship between the Matthean Community and the Parent Body*

Certainly Mt. 21.43 suggests strongly that Matthew's group had parted from the other main strands of the first century Jewish community, especially from Pharisaism. This text (Matt. 21:43) is a most striking text: 'Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it'. It clearly indicates that there was tension and conflict between the Matthean community and the main Jewish body, or more probably its leaders. Firstly, a large part of the text of the Gospel directly attacks the leadership of the main Jewish body, Matthew expresses a negative attitude towards the Pharisees and scribes; his Gospel contains more disputes with the leaders of Judaism than do the other two synoptic Gospels. Mark depicts the Pharisees and scribes as hypocrites only once (Mk. 7:6) and Luke does not concern himself at all with this accusation, whereas Matthew has twelve such references, six of which are in chapter 23. There is no sign of friendliness with the Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew, in contrast to Luke which contains the Pharisees inviting Jesus to dine with them (Lk. 7:36 and 14:1) and Pharisees who warned Jesus that Herod wanted to kill him (Lk. 13:31). Mark portrayed a sympathetic scribe (Mk. 12:28) but Matthew makes him a hostile Pharisee.<sup>125</sup> It suggests the distance between the Matthean community and the leaders of the main Jewish community, particularly the Pharisees.

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1990 *Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 592-602; and also Overman, 1996; Saldarini, 1994; Sim, 1998.

<sup>125</sup> Stanton, 1992, 127.



Stanton argues that polemic is frequently part of a sect's self-understanding as a distinct entity over against its parent body.<sup>126</sup> In opposition to the Jews, Matthew alone has the Jewish crowds in Jerusalem which cry out that the blood of Jesus will be upon them and even upon their children (27:25).<sup>127</sup> The Matthean Jesus is presented as harshly opposed to the Pharisees and the scribes. While the Gospel is very conservatively Jewish in its tone, the presentations of the Jews are often harshly critical and polemical which gives the impression that the Matthean community had probably separated from the parent Jewish body and stood at a distance from them. For Stanton, in the light of Mt. 21.43, the term 'new people' is preferable. The evangelist adds this entire verse to the Markan parable of the wicked servants. It is addressed to the leaders of the Jews in reaction to their rejection of the son of God, the owner of the vineyard, declaring that the tenants themselves will be rejected and the kingdom will be given to a different people (ἐθνος).<sup>128</sup>

On the other hand, Saldarini argues that the Matthean community is a law-observant community; the Gospel of Matthew cannot be compared or contrasted with Judaism because the Gospel is in a real sense a Jewish document, written within what the author and his opponents understood as Judaism. They debated the shape of Judaism, constructing competing identities in contrast to one another. Matthew defends his interpretation of Judaism and attacks the crucial aspects of his opponents' views of Judaism. But he did it within the tradition of Judaism and in Jewish categories concerning questions aroused within Judaism.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, he states

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<sup>126</sup> Stanton, 1992, 96-7.

<sup>127</sup> See also Sim, 1998, 1; no other passion narrative in the four Gospels has this phrase.

<sup>128</sup> Stanton, 1992, 11.

<sup>129</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 110.

that these conflicts and struggles are for group identity and they are only the processes which go on continually within large communities. Such communities often produce subgroups within the overall group, but never a separate community.<sup>130</sup> From his viewpoint the conflict does not necessarily mean group separation. He reads and interprets the text as an inner Jewish polemic.<sup>131</sup>

Overman<sup>132</sup> and D. J. Harrington<sup>133</sup> interpret the text (21.43) to mean that the kingdom will be taken from one group of people and given to another group of people, not from a nation to another nation. For them δοθήσεται ἕθνει does not necessarily mean 'nation' but an ethnic group or a leadership group. In agreement with Overman, Harrington, and Saldarini, Sim also believes that it speaks of a group of people. Sim links the phrase with the the pericope of the parable of the wicked servants in which there is no reference to the nation but to the tenants of the vineyard as a group of people. In that parable the vineyard represents the nation of Israel and there is no indication that the vineyard does anything wrong or is to be replaced. The victims who are to be punished in the parable are the tenants which refers to the leaders of Israel. The group of people who are to be given the kingdom, the new tenants and the legitimate leaders of the Jewish people are either the Matthean community or Christian Judaism in general.<sup>134</sup> Sim concludes that this pericope in no way suggests parting company with the Matthean community; it attacks the leadership of the dominant Jewish community.

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<sup>130</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 107.

<sup>131</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 44-5, 60.

<sup>132</sup> Overman, 1996, 303. Saldarini also has similar reading of the text as cited above.

<sup>133</sup> D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Sacra Pagina, Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1991), 303.

<sup>134</sup> Sim, 1998, 148-9; Overman and Saldarini also share the same idea, see Saldarini, 1994, 60; Overman, 1996, 304.

It is true that the text is linked with the parable of the wicked servants (Mt. 21.33-41) which is a Matthean redaction of the Markan version of the parable in Mk. 12.1-9. Joel Marcus' study on the parable of the wicked servants is noteworthy here.<sup>135</sup> Marcus looks back to Isa. 5.1-7 as the background of the Markan parable where Israel is spoken of as the Lord's vineyard and threatened with devastation by a foreign power as a punishment for its injustice and violence. Mark is using the vineyard parable as a symbol of the fate of Israel and the fulfilment of Isa. 5.7. Marcus also sees that Mk. 12.12 might be thought of as attacking the leaders of Israel, as the treatment is negative in contrast to the positive reaction of the crowd which is supported by intertextual evidence in Isa. 3.14 where the Lord enters into judgement with the *elders* and rulers of the people for devouring the *vineyard*.<sup>136</sup> However, Marcus argues that in Isa. 5, the vineyard is not simply the leaders but 'the inhabitants of Jerusalem', 'the men of Judah' and 'the house of Israel' (Isa. 5.3, 7), which all means Israel as a whole. In this viewpoint of Marcus, Mk. 12.9 is to be understood as a reference to the destruction of Jewish sovereignty in Eretz Israel and the transfer of the salvation-historical prerogatives of Israel to the church. The leaders, the scribes, the elders, those who are symbolized by the tenant farmers from whom the vineyard is removed, are nevertheless certainly included in the whole of Israel. Therefore, Marcus is convinced that the Markan parable also speaks of the Jewish people as a whole, or at least of that large majority of the people that rejected

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<sup>135</sup> Joel Marcus, 'The intertextual polemic of the Markan vineyard parable,' in *Tolerance and Intolerance in early Judaism and Christianity*, Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 211-227. Marcus states that eight of the Greek words in the LXX version of Isa. 5.1-2 are used in Mk. 12.1-2 to describe the planting and the protection of the vineyard; and those words in Isaiah and Mark are closely echoed one another which testifies that the parable in Mark is drawn from the Isaianic background.

<sup>136</sup> Marcus, 1998, 212.

the Gospel message.<sup>137</sup> Marcus points out that Mark, the evangelist, omitted the Isaianic text of 27.2-9 where the Lord promised the restoration and the re-use of Israel. The Scripture has, accordingly been twisted and Christians have misinterpreted the vineyard parable in such a way as to create intolerance between Christians and the Jewish people in history. Marcus argues for the rightful inheritance of the land of Canaan for the Jewish people.

However, one may need to think that the concern of the evangelists (Matthew and Mark) in this parable is not the land, but the kingdom of God which will be taken away from one people and given to another. The kingdom of God is neither the land nor the people of Israel in the thoughts of the evangelists; rather, it is God's rule over the hearts and lives of his people which is not limited to the land of Israel or to the Jewish people only. We should not become confused between the geographical land of Israel and the invisible rule of God which is his kingdom in the thoughts of the evangelists in the first century. By the time of composition of the Gospels it was understood by the evangelists that the house of Israel was defiled and had transgressed in many ways, and God seems to have vomited the people of Israel and his rule or kingdom was no longer in Israel (Mt. 23:37-39). It is then, possible to see, as Stanton, Gnilka, Hagner, Gundry, France, Hare, and others do, (21.43) that the kingdom of God will be taken from the Jewish nation and given to the new ethnic group of people comprising Jews and Gentiles.<sup>138</sup> In answer to the question:

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<sup>137</sup> Marcus, 1998, 213-4.

<sup>138</sup> Stanton, 1992, 11-12, 18, 151-2, 271, 276, 331 and elsewhere; J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2 vols., HTKNT, (Freiburg: Herder, 1986, 1988), 230; Hagner, 1993, 1995, 623; R. Gundry, 'A Responsive Evaluation of the Social History of the Matthean Community in Roman Syria', in D. L. Balch (ed.), *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 63-4; France, 1989, 223-4; D. R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, SNTSMS 6, (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Whether the kingdom is taken from the people of Israel (as Stanton and others), or from the leaders of Israel (as Sim and others), the intertextual evidence (Isa. 5.1-7) testifies also that the vineyard represents the people of Israel as a whole. Then it is an impression from the text that suggests the breaking away of the Matthean community from their parent body. Moreover, when the evangelist attacks the leaders of Israel, it would seem increasingly to support the notion that Matthew's group had parted from the leadership of the parent body. It is also important to consider that the leaders represent the people or the nation and national privilege. When the evangelist attacks the leaders of Israel that attack affects the whole house of Israel, and suggests that the evangelist's attack on the leaders of Israel does not mean the pericope is an inter-Jewish polemic within a community, but a conflict between a separated Jewish community and its parent body.

The identity of those to whom the kingdom will be given is disputed among scholars. Sim interprets it as either the Matthean community or Christian Judaism in general. Stanton also reads it as a *people*, which again he interprets as the *new people*, the Christian church, who form the evangelist's readership.<sup>139</sup> For Stanton this is probably the clearest indication in the Gospel that the Matthean community (the Christian church) saw themselves as separated from Judaism,<sup>140</sup> and means that the kingdom of God is transferred from Israel to the church<sup>141</sup> where the Matthean community considered themselves as the *ἔθνος* that replaced the rejected Israel.<sup>142</sup> Logically, when something is taken from someone and given to another, the two

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Press, 1967), 153-4. Scholars cited here use the term 'Christian church' but I paraphrase it as the new ethnic group of people.

<sup>139</sup> Stanton, 1992, 11-12.

<sup>140</sup> Stanton, 1992, 151.

people do not share that property nor live on communal ground. This is to say, the Matthean group and the mainstream group of Israel (or the leaders of the Jewish community) did not share the property of the kingdom nor did they live on common ground. By implication, the Matthean community had probably parted from the main Jewish community.

Whether Matthew's group is labelled as a Christian church or a sect of Judaism is still in question. However, one thing is clear that the kingdom is given to the readers of the evangelist, his new group, the ἔθνος. The ἔθνος in its original meaning, is neither a nation nor a particular church but an ἔθνος a people group. In the understanding of the evangelist, the kingdom, which will be given to the new ἔθνος group, does not seem to be the land of Israel or even the people of Israel, but any group who are obedient in doing the will of God (Mt. 7.21; 12.50; cf. 10.29) and whom God rules in heart and life.

#### ***4. 2. 3 A sociological approach in relation to the relationship between the***

##### ***Matthean Ethnic Community and the main Jewish Body***

From a sociological point of view, Saldarini believes that the nature of the relationship between Matthew's group and the larger community can be understood through the concept of deviance, that depends on changing tensions in the social environment.<sup>143</sup> Saldarini argues that a key word 'ἐκκλησία', which is interpreted

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<sup>141</sup> Stanton, 1992, 271.

<sup>142</sup> Stanton, 1992, 276.

<sup>143</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 107.

by Graham Stanton and many other scholars as 'church',<sup>144</sup> does not necessarily mean 'church'; he sees that it needs detailed and critical study in the light of sociological categories such as deviance, association, sect, movement, and cult which may assist in characterising Matthew's group.

Most ancient and many modern societies see deviant behaviour and groups as objectively evil because they are viewed as contradictory to divine or natural order or as inspired by evil powers (demonic possession, witchcraft, etc).<sup>145</sup> In modern sociology, deviance is understood as a relationship between two individuals or groups, not as an objective state. In a society when a community or powerful group imposes certain rules which define what is normal in society, other individuals or groups who do not conform to the rules are designated as deviant. For example, criminals, minorities and people of other cultures are customarily labelled as not normal, or deviant; they may be rejected or accepted with reservations. Deviance may be minor or sometimes serious. Murder, or participation in a culturally unacceptable religion will be given severe penalties or social ostracism. Conflict, tension, and serious differences within a culture can be understood as subculture deviance.<sup>146</sup>

Depending on the degree of tension between a deviant group and the larger group in the society, deviance may greatly vary in its intensity. In the sociology of religion, deviant groups are usually labelled as 'sects' and the term 'sect' is often defined in opposition to 'church'. Benton Johnston makes a statement to define

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<sup>144</sup> The use of *ἐκκλησία* and *συναγωγή* will be dealt shortly in detailed in 4.2.4, see 176-86 of this work.

<sup>145</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 108, n. 94.

<sup>146</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 108, n. 96.

church and sect, 'A Church is a religious group that accepts the social environment in which it exists. A sect is a religious group that rejects the social environment in which it exists'.<sup>147</sup> Sects are usually in greater tension with their main society. Lewis Coser states that, 'the closer the relationship, the more intense the conflict. A conflict is more passionate and more radical when it arises out of close relationships. The coexistence of union and opposition in such relations makes for the peculiar sharpness of the conflict. Enmity calls forth deeper and more violent reactions, the greater the involvement of the parties among whom it originates.'<sup>148</sup> If we view the relationship between the Matthean group and the parent body from this sociological viewpoint of Coser, we have sufficient evidence about the conflict and tension that resulted in persecution from the main Jewish body (Mt. 5:10-12, 10:17f., 21:41-5, 22:6f., 23:31-5) and also from the Gentile world (Mt. 5:20-48, 18:8-9, 19:11-12). Within the religious sphere churches and sects are in tension and often in conflict with another. The church-sect distinction can be generalised by transforming it into one between religious institutions and religious movements. A religious institution is defined as a stable social structure with roles, norms, values, and activities closely integrated to society<sup>149</sup>. Religious movements are defined as deviant groups with social movements that wish to cause or prevent change in a system of beliefs, values, symbols, and practices.<sup>150</sup> In other words, the religious movements are intending to become religious institutions, that is, the dominant faith in their society. This relational definition of deviance helps us to understand the opposing views and groups in first

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<sup>147</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 108-9. For detailed discussion see, Benton Johnson, 'On Church and Sect,' *American Sociological Review* 28 (1963): 542.

<sup>148</sup> Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, (London, 1956), 71.

<sup>149</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 109, n. 99.



century Judaism. Within Judaism, Matthew's group is viewed by the majority of Jews as deviant. In Saldarini's view, Matthew's group has deviated from some of the culturally accepted ways of acting and thinking Jewishly, but it has not ceased to be Jewish in outlook, behaviour, and identity. The author of Matthew hopes to convince the majority group as the first target and other sects as well, to adopt their different behaviour so that it will become normative and no longer deviant.<sup>151</sup>

L. M. White gives a helpful definition of a sect and says that a sect is 'a deviant or separatist movement within a cohesive and religiously defined dominant culture. Thus despite expressed hostilities and exclusivism, the sect shares the same basic constellation of beliefs or 'worldview' of the dominant cultural idiom.'<sup>152</sup> It is true within the Matthean community that despite their self exclusivism and likely separation from the parent body, they shared much of belief, custom, tradition, and religious practice with the parent body, which seems to lead some scholars to see the Matthean community as one kind of Judaism. This sociological definition of the term 'sect' given by White helps us to see that the many common practices of Matthew's group and the parent body does not mean the Matthean community was within Judaism but it had its origin in the dominant culture, the main Jewish community.

Despite the fact that deviant groups are often evaluated as evil, particularly in ancient society, Saldarini sees the existence of deviance as an essential fact; stipulation of what counts as deviance is an essential part of the process whereby a society defines its identity. The society's interpretation of deviant groups shows where it draws its boundaries, and exposes the structures and values in its social and

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<sup>150</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 109. n. 99.

<sup>151</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 109.

symbolic system.<sup>153</sup> In fact, deviants are a necessary part of society, and tension between them and the dominant institutions is often creative.<sup>154</sup>

The question whether Matthew is *intra* or *extra muros* largely depends on how their boundaries are defined. In sociology the boundaries of a society depend on a variety of factors. Deviance categories are a sign that a society has voluntarily restricted itself to a constant and stable pattern of activity.<sup>155</sup> For first century Judaism deviance is also part of an important social process associated not only with stability and change, but also with continuity and adaptation<sup>156</sup> because 'it keeps a society from rigidifying and failing to fulfil its necessary functions.'<sup>157</sup> In a sense Saldarini is right in claiming that Jewish literature of the first century, including the Gospel of Matthew, testifies to the fact that many groups competed for power and influence with others, and each considered their group as the true Israel. But his claim that they (all the sects and deviances including the Matthean community as a sect) all remained within the ultimate boundaries which defined Judaism may need further consideration. It depends on how we define Judaism and Christianity. If we define any law observant movements or institutions as Judaism and any law-free movement as Christian church, it is possible to see the Matthean group as within Judaism. But if we consider the fact that the term Christian is built upon the messianic title of Christ, and recognize that there were two basic versions of Christianity in the early church movement, that is, the law-observant and the law-free Gospel, then it may not be necessary to put the

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<sup>152</sup> L. M. White, 'Shifting Sectarian Boundaries in Early Christianity,' *BJRL* 70 (1988) 14.

<sup>153</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 109. For detailed discussion see Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Deviance and Moral Boundaries: Witchcraft, the Occult, deviant Sciences and Scientists*, (Chicago: University Press, 1985), 19-20.

<sup>154</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 109.

<sup>155</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 110. n.106.

<sup>156</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 110, n. 107.

Matthean group within Judaism because they certainly accepted Jesus as the Messiah which Judaism rejected.

Nevertheless Matthew taught to observe the law in its entirety (Mt. 5:19-20) which directs us to the point where the Matthean community could be identified as a law observant Jewish Christian church. We also have a biblical record from Luke that the believers in Antioch were called Christians for the first time (Acts 11:26). If our hypothesis in locating the First Gospel at Antioch is correct, then it is quite possible that the Matthean church was identified as a Christian church at least for a period or so. However, an alternative consideration is that the law-free Gospel was spread to Antioch, and the disciples were called Christians in that first generation in opposition to Judaism; after a generation or so, by the time the Gospel was finally composed the church in Antioch had turned to the law-observant gospel movement, and was perhaps more Jewish than its position and identification during the lifetime of the first generation Christians.

#### ***4. 2. 4 An analysis of the Matthean usage of ἐκκλησία and συναγωγή in relation to the relationship between the Matthean Ethnic Community and the Jewish Parent Body***

##### ***(a) The Matthean Usage of συναγωγή***

In relation to the use of συναγωγή Matthew has six passages in which he modifies an earlier tradition. Sometimes he also uses his redactional skills to stress the distance between the ἐκκλησία and the συναγωγή (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54:

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<sup>157</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 110-111.

23:34). Stanton states that in the Matthean understanding the ἐκκλησία is founded by Jesus (16:8; cf. 18:17) and the συναγωγή is viewed as the self identification of the parent group; and in other five passages of the above cited six passages, αὐτῶν is used with συναγωγή implicitly, but in 23:34 it (αὐτῶν) becomes explicit.<sup>158</sup> Mark refers four times to a ruler of synagogue (5:22, 35, 36, 38). Matthew edits these so that he is still portrayed as a man of faith but loses his name and becomes merely an anonymous official (9:18,23); there is no indication that he has any connection with a synagogue. Moreover, Matthew changes Mark's description of Jairus as εἰς τῶν ἀρχισυναγῶγων to ἄρχων in his redactional work in Mt. 9:18 to avoid the linking of Jesus with the synagogue.<sup>159</sup>

Matthew associates the scribes and Pharisees with the synagogue and refers to 'their, synagogues,' (Mt. 23:6, 34; cf. 10:17). In passages: Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54, he uses his redactional phrase 'their synagogue' and in 23: 34 he uses his own phrase 'your synagogue'. Matthew has three further uses of συναγωγή (6:2,5; 23:6). In each of these three passages there is a strong negative connotation; disciples of Jesus are warned not to follow the steps or example of scribes and Pharisees in the synagogue. The passages strongly suggest that for Matthew the synagogue has almost become an alien institution,<sup>160</sup> and Matthew seems to draw a sharp line between the synagogue and Jesus and his disciples.<sup>161</sup> Luz also has the same idea that the Matthean community and the synagogue go in different directions, and this means that

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<sup>158</sup> Stanton, 1992, 97.

<sup>159</sup> Stanton, 1992, 97,127.

<sup>160</sup> Stanton, 1992, 120.

<sup>161</sup> See also Stanton, 1992, 128.

the Matthean community, in spite of Jesus' affirmation of the Law and the prophets, has technically separated from Israel.<sup>162</sup>

Contrary to Stanton's reading of the Matthean language of συναγωγή, Sim critically analyses the texts 6:2,5 and 23:6 and argues that the evangelist has clearly in mind the local synagogues of his setting and not every synagogue in the Jewish world<sup>163</sup>. He argues that the usual view of the phrase 'their synagogue' as denoting the Jewish mainstream body in a negative usage, is parallel with the use of 'their scribes'. Sim further states that this expression of 'scribes' suggests the existence of scribes in the Matthean community, so also does 'their synagogues' imply that the Matthean community is in some sense a synagogue.<sup>164</sup> For me it is not quite convincing because the Matthean usage in each context is clear: there were two kinds of scribes, one is scribes in the Matthean community and the other one is outside of the Matthean community; for example, in 23:34, the phrase 'I send you...scribes' indicates the scribes of the Matthean community, but when the evangelist intends to refer to the scribes outside of his community he clearly and descriptively uses 'their scribes', or 'you scribes' (23:13,15, 23,25,27,29 etc). In my judgement, Sim's argument is not convincing at this point because the evangelist uses the terms and clauses in distinguishable contexts. Whenever he refers to the scribes outside of his group, the evangelist clearly indicates 'their scribes' or 'you scribes'(23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29, etc.); but when he intends to refer to the scribes in his own community he says 'scribes, prophets' sent by Jesus (23:34). Therefore, it is very likely that when he used 'your synagogue' or 'their synagogue', it indicates the possessive case of his

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<sup>162</sup> Luz, 1989, 216-7.

<sup>163</sup> Sim, 1998, 147.

opponents and the fact that it rather gives the impression of a distance between the Matthean community and the assembly of the synagogues.

(b) *The Matthean Usage of ἐκκλησία*

On the other side of the synagogue there stands the ἐκκλησία, supposed to be founded by Jesus himself and promised protection (16:18). Matthew uses ἐκκλησία three times (16:18 and twice in 18:17) but this term is not found in the other three Gospels. The church has its own entrance rite, the baptismal formula (28:19). This Matthean version of liturgical usage and his redaction of Mark's account of the Last Supper (26:26-30), indicate that the church in Matthew's day has its own distinctive form of worship.<sup>165</sup> In a number of passages Matthew emphasises the promise that Jesus would be present with the disciples, just as God was with his people in the Temple and in the synagogues (8:23-37; 14:22-33; 18:20; 28:20). At Mt. 23:21 we see that many Jews continued to regard God's presence in the Temple as a central belief. But Matthew boldly emphasises that the Jerusalem Temple is forsaken and desolate (23:38); with the coming of Jesus something greater than the Temple is here present (12:6).

Stanton further argues that in the church, the newly emerging community, the commands of Jesus took precedence, and hearing and doing the authoritative words of Jesus are of paramount importance (7:24-27), because the words of Jesus are 'commands' for the life of the church (28:20). In Stanton's view, the new church (the Matthean community) is quite independent of the synagogue. It exercises the rights of

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<sup>164</sup> Sim, 1998, 147.

<sup>165</sup> Stanton, 1992, 129.

inclusion and exclusion from the community (16:19; 18:19).<sup>166</sup> By saying this, Stanton sees that Matthew emphasizes Jesus' commands rather than the Law; though it does not mean he ignores the Law. Stanton states his view clearly that the ἐκκλησία founded by Jesus continues to have firm commitment to Torah.<sup>167</sup> So he concludes that the Matthean community is the new church and the members are the new people. The synagogue and the ἐκκλησία go on their own ways separately. The new people, the ἐκκλησία explicitly becomes the fulfilment of 21: 41,43. Stanton's interpretation of Matthew and his position in his society is that the church or the Matthean community are the same, and they are the new people of God; they stood outside of Judaism sociologically and in religious practice and belief. At the end of the sharp polemic towards the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23, Jesus says, 'I am sending to you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some of whom you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town,' this clearly indicates the enmity between the two units, the Matthean community and the main parent body. Therefore, Stanton is quite convinced that the 'new people' has chosen a new self-identification in order to distance itself from its parent body: ἐκκλησία and συναγωγή are separate rival institutions.

Thus, Stanton argues that, by investigating the terms of ἐκκλησία and συναγωγή, the Matthean community is shown to be a new people sharply separated from their parent body and that Matthew attacks Israel or the Jewish community as a whole. Saldarini however, argues also by detailed investigation of the term ἐκκλησία. Saldarini notes that ἐκκλησία was primarily used for an assembly of citizens. In the

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<sup>166</sup> Stanton, 1992, 130.

Greco-Roman world it was used by Greek voluntary associations to refer to their meeting, and in the Septuagint it is used to refer to the assembly of the people of Israel (Deut. 23:1-3; 31:30; Judg. 20:2). Matthew then used ἐκκλησία to refer to his own community to differentiate it from the assembly (synagogues) of the parent bodies.<sup>168</sup> Saldarini's thesis is that the Matthean community had its own gathering, different from the synagogue of the main Jewish community but it does not convey that they had parted from Judaism. He believes that the Matthean group is not separated from the Jewish community; they are only a deviant group struggling within the Jewish community.

His main point in this argument is that Matthew's attack is not on the whole Israel nor the Jewish community, but only on the leaders of Israel. He points out to support his argument that the only groups unequivocally rejected by Matthew are the leaders of Israel, the Pharisees, scribes, chief priests, elders of the people, the Sadducees and Herodians (Mt. 16:1; 22:23; 22:16).<sup>169</sup> Matthew's purpose, according to Saldarini,<sup>170</sup> is to tear down the effective authority of the community leaders and exercise his own leadership in order to bring about the reforms Jesus taught. Matthew nowhere rejects Judaism or Jewish people as a whole, rather certain interpretations of Judaism and the opposing leaders. Matthew's attack on the Jewish community leadership is contained in seven woe oracles in which Jesus condemns the scribes and the Pharisees seven times (vv. 23:13,15, 16, 23, 25, 27,29). In the Matthean version Jesus opens his controversy by cursing them, 'woe to you,

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<sup>167</sup> Stanton, 1992, 130.

<sup>168</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 116-119; cf. Sim, 1998, 147, n. 106.

<sup>169</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 44.

<sup>170</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 44.



Pharisees, scribes, hypocrites.’<sup>171</sup> He does not curse Israel as a whole but only the leaders. Among the seven woe oracles, the first woe accuses the leaders of gross malfeasance: ‘You shut the kingdom of heaven against men;....’ (23:13). The second woe testifies to Jewish success in attracting Gentile members and attacks the conversion of Gentiles to the form of Judaism opposed by Matthew (23:15).<sup>172</sup>

In the third woe Matthew attacks rules concerning oaths and vows. In the fourth and fifth woes he does not reject or omit Jewish laws concerning tithing, but relativizes their importance and changes their meaning.<sup>173</sup> The sixth woe, charges the scribes and Pharisees with lawlessness and hypocrisy. This charge leads to the seventh woe oracle. The scribes and Pharisees build tombs to prophets and martyrs whom they themselves killed.<sup>174</sup> Matthew’s vitriolic tone in numerous and detailed accusations suggests that he was attacking the Jewish leaders. Their leaders had disciplined and finally expelled the Matthean group from their assembly (synagogue). Saldarini’s argument is clearly that Matthew attacks the leaders of the Jewish community and the Pharisees, scribes, those who reject Jesus and the Matthean community.

G. D. Kilpatrick believes that Matthew’s Gospel was essentially written to a Jewish Christian community, where, the early church was in progress of becoming independent from Judaism. The Gospel was composed much from Jewish material (Judaism) at the same time as it radically distinguished the church (Matthew’s church)

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<sup>171</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 49.

<sup>172</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 50.

<sup>173</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 50.

<sup>174</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 51.

from the synagogue<sup>175</sup> that implies a radical change in the relationship between the main Judaism and Matthew's group as reflected in the attitude to the synagogues (cf. Mt. 12:9-10, 13:53-8, 6:2, 10:17, 23:34). Bornkamm developed Kilpatrick's hypothesis and suggested further that Matthew's Jewish Christian community had not broken its link with Judaism.<sup>176</sup> Bornkamm based his argument on the pericope about the Temple tax in 17:24-7. In this pericope the Matthean community seems to pay tax as a traditional practice in Judaism which might imply that they were still attached to Judaism. R. Hummel also agrees with Kilpatrick. Hummel states that payment of Temple tax in 17:27 is sufficiently decisive to conclude that Matthew's community still belonged to Judaism even though it developed its own independent life.<sup>177</sup> The statement of the Matthean Jesus which says that 'the sons are free from tax' indicates the progress of developing their own independent community. As followers of Jesus they perceive that they are the sons of God and supposed to be free from taxation. The payment of tax should not necessary mean the linkage to Judaism; it is possible that in respect to their parent body and to lessen the persecution they were taught to give tax so that their action does not offend others as reflected in the words of the Matthean Jesus in the text (17:27a).

Bornkamm modified his position between 1956<sup>178</sup> and 1970. In the latter work, a study of Matthew 18, he referred to 18:19f and claimed that the Matthean community knows itself to be cut off from the Jewish community; they gathered no

<sup>175</sup> Kilpatrick, 1946, 123; See also Stanton, 1992, 119-20.

<sup>176</sup> G. Bornkamm, 'End-Expectation and Church in Matthew', in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, (London: SCM Press, 1963), 22, n. 1; cf. Stanton, 1992, 120.

<sup>177</sup> R. Hummel, 'Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium', *BevT* 33, (Munich: Kaiser, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1966), 28-33, 41, 62-8. See also Stanton, 1992, 120-1.

<sup>178</sup> See his position in cited above essay Bornkamm, 1963, n. 1.

longer about the Torah, but in the name of Jesus, in faith in him and in confession of him, and as such to be assured of his presence.<sup>179</sup> Schuyler Brown suggests that Gentile mission was the current issue debated within the Matthean community, and that, in addressing the issue of Gentile mission and Jewish mission the evangelist used his distinctive Matthean phrase συναγωγή αὐτῶν. This suggests that the Matthean community is distinct from the synagogues.<sup>180</sup>

E. Schweizer sees Lk.6:22 as suggesting that Christians were excommunicated from synagogues but the parallel text in the First Gospel (5:11) does not speak about expulsion of Christians, perhaps indicating that the Matthean community had not yet parted from the synagogues.<sup>181</sup> But a passage such as 10:23 is clear enough and explicitly indicates the persecution of the disciples of Jesus from town to town, and in 23:34 the killing and crucifixion of these disciples sent out by Jesus strongly suggest the severe persecution which would most probably result in parting from the main Jewish community.<sup>182</sup>

Overman also acknowledges the increasing separation of the Matthean community from the Jewish body, as he states that, 'as the Matthean community continued to feel pressure and competition from the developing, dominant Jewish body and increasingly felt themselves separated from that Jewish group'...he (Overman) continues, 'as the Matthean community increasingly became isolated from

<sup>179</sup> Bornkamm, 'The Authority to "Bind" and to "loose"', *Jesus and Man's Hope 1*, D.G. Miller et al., ed., (Pittsburgh, 1970), 41; cf. Stanton, 1992, 122.

<sup>180</sup> Schuyler Brown, 'The Matthean Community and the Gentile Mission,' *NovT* 22 (1980), 216; Stanton, 1992, 122.

<sup>181</sup> E. Schweizer, 'Matthäus und seine Gemeinde', *SBS* 71, Stuttgart 1974. See also Stanton, 1992, 126.

<sup>182</sup> Stanton also shares the same idea, but unfortunately he gives the wrong reference Mt. 22:34 in which there is no idea about synagogue at all, see Stanton, 1992, 128.

the group that was emerging as dominant in their society'.<sup>183</sup> He makes a clear statement that 'lines of separation have been drawn, in a manner that appears to offer no way back. The paths of the Matthean community and formative Judaism do not flow together from this point forward, but appear rather to diverge'.<sup>184</sup> However, in the thought of Overman, Matthew and his community had not broken their ties entirely from formative Judaism by the time of the Gospel composition.<sup>185</sup>

At one point Overman seems to be convinced himself that the Matthean group formed a separate gathering when he says, 'Matthew's community has developed its own gathering place, an *ekklesia*, which constitutes the community's institutional response to the gathering place of formative Judaism, *autōn synagogē*, their synagogue'.<sup>186</sup> Nevertheless Overman clearly makes his point finally in his conclusion that Matthew's community was sectarian.<sup>187</sup> Sim also agrees that the Matthean community bears all the marks of a sectarian Jewish community and in fact, the evangelist's group was a sect within Judaism.<sup>188</sup> Sim claims clearly that the Matthean community was not a body of Jewish dissidents or apostates who had abandoned the Jewish faith, but on the contrary, Matthew's group was still fundamentally Jewish in practice and belief and perceived itself to present the true version of Judaism.<sup>189</sup> Sim further argues that the privileged position of the Jewish people as the elect and the obligation of law-observance are the central marks of

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<sup>183</sup> Overman, 1990, 90-91.

<sup>184</sup> Overman, 1990, 149.

<sup>185</sup> Overman, 1990, 148.

<sup>186</sup> Overman, 1990, 152.

<sup>187</sup> Overman, 1990, 154; for his full discussion see, 6-34.

<sup>188</sup> Sim, 1998, 142.

<sup>189</sup> Sim, 1998, 142.

Judaism which the Matthean community tried to adopt and practise in full.<sup>190</sup> At the same time he also admits that the Matthean usage of the phrase ‘their synagogue’ indicates separation of Matthew’s group from the synagogue.<sup>191</sup>

Sim further argues that the use of ἐκκλησία in the Matthean language cannot be identified precisely with Pauline usage.<sup>192</sup> He suggests that, if we claim that the use of ἐκκλησία is the same in the work of the two New Testament authors, Matthew and Paul, this would mean putting Matthew within or close to the Pauline tradition. Since Paul and Matthew stood in completely different streams of the early Christian movement, it is therefore, unlikely that Matthew followed the Pauline tradition.<sup>193</sup> But Matthew does not stand in an entirely opposite stream to the Pauline tradition. We do not have any evidence in the text which indicates a strong anti-Pauline stance. It is not Matthew but James who stands quite opposite to Pauline law-free mission in the early Christian movement (Gal. 2.11-12). The Matthean Jesus rather ignores his own family (including his brother James) and gives first place to whoever does the will of his Father and calls them his brothers, sisters and mother (Mt. 12.46-50). At one point Sim acknowledges the possibility of Stanton’s position that the Matthean community’s abandonment of the local synagogues is suggestive of the parting of Matthew’s group from Judaism.

#### 4. 2. 5 *An Analysis of the arguments of Overman, Saldarini, and Sim*

For Overman and Saldarini, Matthew and his group adopted the term ἐκκλησία from a non-Pauline group but within the confines of Judaism, so that they

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<sup>190</sup> Sim, 1998, 142.

<sup>191</sup> Sim, 1998, 143.

<sup>192</sup> Sim, 1998, 145.

tend to locate the Matthean community within Judaism. Overman defines the movement of Matthew and his group as Matthean Judaism while accepting the view that the Matthean community identified itself as the ἐκκλησία standing in opposition to the synagogues of the parent body.

While Overman, Saldarini, and Sim locate the Matthean community within Judaism and view it sociologically as a sect of Judaism, the difference between them is that, Overman puts Matthew's group within formative Judaism from where he (Matthew) attacked the formative Judaism.<sup>194</sup> Sim understands the Matthean community and views it as a parallel movement or one kind of Judaism attacking the leadership of the mainstream Judaism in the period of formative Judaism, if I understand him correctly, but far from outside of Judaism.<sup>195</sup> In other words, Overman locates the Matthean community within formative Judaism yet opposed to it. Sim sees it as one kind of Judaism, Matthean Jewish-Christian, which posed to the main Jewish community leaders. But they, Overman and Sim, are close to one another.

In conclusion, the two notions have good grounds and are well presented. From our analysis of the two terms, it appears that the terms ἐκκλησία and συναγωγή are often seen as a mark of separation from Judaism. The ἐκκλησία is interpreted as the church having parted from Judaism. In fact it is necessary to conclude that the Matthean group had become physically and sociologically isolated from its main Jewish parent body. In my opinion, at the earliest stage while Paul had his influence at the Antiochene church, it was very likely that the disciples were

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<sup>193</sup> Sim, 1998, 145.

<sup>194</sup> Overman, 1990, 148.

identified as Christians (cf. Acts 11:26); but by the time of the Gospel composition, the author was intending to legitimate his group as the true Israel which replaced the parent body from which they had parted recently; so that the polemics, as they have their roots in Judaism, are often seen by scholars as inner struggle within Judaism.

#### **4.2.6 *Comparison with the Qumran Community in relation to the relationship between the Matthean Community and its Parent Body***

Stanton constructs a comparative study of the Qumran community and the Matthean Community which is interesting to examine with careful attention. He argues that the Matthean community and the Qumran community were in sharp conflict with their parent body from which they both had recently parted painfully. The similarities are reflected in the two documents (Matthew's Gospel and the Damascus Document) as they were written for their sectarian communities. We will examine Stanton's discussion on this issue. Both of the writings present from the foundation for their respective communities and try to legitimate separation by using several strategies.<sup>196</sup>

Stanton<sup>197</sup> compares the epilogue of a letter from Qumran (4Q394-399) now usually abbreviated as MMT with Mt. 5:20 and the antitheses in 5:21-48. The epilogue includes: 'We have separated ourselves from the majority of the peo[ple...] from intermingling in these matters and from participating with them in these [matters]'. From a sociological point of view a sect is usually more strict than its opponents in its

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<sup>195</sup> Sim, 1998, 146.

<sup>196</sup> Stanton, 1992, 88.

<sup>197</sup> Stanton, 1992, 92-3.

halakah. So in this case Stanton takes Mt. 5:20 as a key fact indicating the more strict law-observance of Matthew's group than their parent body which reinforces his thesis that Matthew's community had parted from their parent body in comparison to the Qumran community's epilogue which had parted from their main body.

In the Damascus Document, it appears that the roots of the protest movement within Essenism had become a sect with a separate identity and tightly drawn boundaries; and the sect bears much of the parent body's worldview in spite of distinctive views that led to separation.<sup>198</sup> As Stanton states above, Matthew's strong emphasis on law-observance would seem to support the suggestion that Matthew and his group intended to compete with their parent body. The competitive motif of the Matthean group reflects their parting from the main Jewish community (cf. Mt.5:17f.).

The Matthean community considers itself to be under the threat of persecution from their parent body (Mt.5:10-12; 10:17f; 21:41-5; 22:6f; 23:31-5). In the words of the evangelist the Matthean community perceived that their main parent body made false accusations against and misinterpreted them (5:11b). As it is the nature of sects that they are often more jealous than the parent body from which they have parted, Matthew's strict rule for the excellent moral life of his community also seems to suggest separation or at least distinction as a sect from the main Jewish community, especially when Matthew expects his community to exceed the Pharisees and the scribes (Mt 5:20, 48; cf. 6:1-18).

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<sup>198</sup> Stanton takes it from the García Martínez – Groningen hypothesis, García Martínez does not make any conclusion on sociological insights, it is Stanton who makes sociological comments here, see Martínez, F. García, 'Qumran Origins and Early History: a Groningen Hypothesis', *Folia Orientalia* 25 (1988), 113-36; cf. Stanton, 1992, 93.



They understand themselves as being a tiny minority in comparison to their parent body (13:31-32a;) but they look forward to gradually increasing and becoming the parent body of many as reflected in the parable of the mustard seed (13:32). In the Damascus Document despite the small size of the group, their origin is described as a root of God's planting (1.7), as is the Matthean group (Mt. 15:13), and by implication they are the heirs of God preserved even at the time of the exile (1.4). The Qumran community sought God with their whole heart (1. 10b). This is parallel with the concept of the Matthean group (Mt.3:7-10; 8:12; 12:37; 15:13; 23:23-6). These similarities in literature reflect the sects' self-understanding and position and imply the probability of the Matthean group's separation.

In the First Gospel the Pharisees are seen as blind guides (15:14; 23:16,17,19, 24, 26); they are a 'planting' (15:13; cf. 13:5-6) but not planted by God and they will be rooted out, while the righteous will inherit the earth (Mt. 5:5). From the perspective of the sects, the parting of the ways of Matthew's group and the Qumran community were initiated by God and rooted in God (Mt. 21:43 cf. *CD* 1.11). In contrast, the leaders of the parent bodies were also planted but they are not planted by God and will be uprooted (*CD* 1.7; Mt. 15.13).<sup>199</sup> Stanton sees that in Matthew the leaders of the parent body are portrayed as sitting on Moses' seat (23:2), but as in the Damascus Document, the portrayal is soon swamped.<sup>200</sup> But it is more likely that the portrayal is not positive from the very outset of the pericope (Mt. 23:2-7). The pericope in this passage is all about the description of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the scribes; there is no sense of positive portrayal. The Pharisees in Matthew's

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<sup>199</sup> Stanton, 1992, 96.

<sup>200</sup> Stanton, 1992, 96.

Gospel and the Essenes in the Damascus Document are alike blind guides from the viewpoint of the parted sects (*CD* 1.9; Mt. 15:14; 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26). Since the sociological isolation of the Qumran community is a well known fact, so the comparison of parallel passages would imply also the physical isolation of Matthew's group from the main Jewish community.

Sim argues against Stanton and states that the Qumran community lived physically isolated from the larger Jewish society but there is no question that the Qumran sects identified themselves as Jewish. That is to say, even though the Qumran community separated from the dominant Jewish community, they still belonged to the identity of Jewish people and of Judaism. The same self-understanding applies to the Matthean community.<sup>201</sup> Sim argues also that Stanton's position of Matthew's group having separated from Judaism is misdirected; in his assessment, the Matthean community might have parted from formative Judaism but not from the larger or the mainstream Judaism; it is an era when there were many forms of Judaism, including Christian Judaism, at the time of the evangelist.<sup>202</sup> However, all the arguments point to the notion that Matthew's new group had physically removed itself from the parent body. The question is whether Matthew's new group should be identified as one kind of Judaism or as a Christian community? Again, the answer to this issue will depend on our definitions of the terms Judaism and Christianity. Judaism has a messianic concept in later development but Jesus is far from being accepted as the expected Jewish Messiah for the main Jewish community, or the parent body, whereas Matthew and his group undoubtedly confessed Jesus as the Messiah upon whose

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<sup>201</sup> Sim, 1998, 146.

<sup>202</sup> Sim, 1998, 146.

teaching they built up their community. In this case the Matthean community should not be seen as a Jewish group but as a law-observant church. As we have stated above, the problem for critical scholarship is that, Matthew's use of Jewish practice, custom, and having roots within Judaism, and the legitimisation of his group is perceived as one kind of Judaism. It is rather, that Matthew and his group had separated from their parent body, but they formed a firm foundation on Jewish observance and, in the light of Jesus' teaching, aimed to legitimate their separation and evangelize the nations both Jews and Gentiles (Mt. 28:18-20).

#### ***4.2.7 A Study of the pericope in 28:15 in relating to the Relationship between the Matthean Ethnic Community and the main Jewish Community***

Stanton and some other scholars take Mt. 28:15 to support their hypothesis that Matthew's group had already parted from their parent Jewish body, and stood as a quite distinct entity over against Judaism.<sup>203</sup> In this passage the evangelist records that the fallacious story that the disciples stole the body of Jesus and that 'has been spread among the Jews to this day'. Sim argues that the term 'the Jews' is the normal Gentile word. Josephus repeatedly used the term 'the Jews' inclusively of himself throughout his works and in the same way Matthew's use of it should not refer only to the Jews (outside of Matthew's community) but all in general including the Christian Jewish Matthean community.<sup>204</sup> In this kind of issue one should look at the context critically. Josephus writes the life of his own Jewish people with pride; he intends to show the integrity and national pride of the Jews including himself, trying to demonstrate the

<sup>203</sup> Stanton, 1985, 1914. See also Sim, 1998, 149.

<sup>204</sup> Sim, 1998, 149-50.

election and the privilege of the Jews in God's divinely ordained plans, so he proudly used the term 'the Jews' or the Jewish people, or the people of Israel in all of which he himself is included. But in the context of the evangelist in most of the Gospel texts he refers to the Jews with negative attitude and anti-Jewish polemic. Moreover, the pericope in 28:15 is the rumour which was intended to disprove the resurrection of Jesus. By no means would Matthew and his group, who were committed to follow Jesus faithfully, speak of that fallacious story 'till this day'. Sim's argument seems to be misdirecting the intention of the evangelist in this text. Anyone who looks at the context closely might see that the evangelist is talking here of the Jews as distinct from his own group, exclusive of his group.

### ***Conclusion:***

The issue is where to locate this new people in first century Graeco-Roman society. Was the new group of Matthew within Judaism or separated? Or what identification should be given to this group of people? Were they Christians or Christian Jews, or Matthean Jews?

All seem to agree that the Matthean community had parted company sociologically and lived sociologically separated from the parent body. The major dispute among scholars is a theological issue: whether Matthew and his community should be called a Christian community or a sect within Judaism? Most of our evidence points to the fact that the Matthean community in fact separated from the dominant local Jewish communities and formed their own local community (probably in Antioch) with their own interpretations of Torah in the light of Jesus' teaching and life. The dispute, however, is that Overman and Sim place the Matthean community

within mainstream Judaism, and Stanton sees the community as entirely a new people, Christian communities,<sup>205</sup> outside of Judaism. The answer to the question of where to locate the Matthean community is a theological agenda as well as a sociological one.

Sim's central argument is that the practice and belief, and the obligation of law-observance are the central marks of Judaism which the Matthean group tried to adopt in full acceptance.<sup>206</sup> Stanton uses a sociological approach. He analyses particularly the conflict between the Matthean community and the leaders of the dominant Jewish community and concludes that the Matthean community had recently parted painfully from the dominant Jewish community; they had chosen a new self-identification and become a new people which distanced itself from the parent body.<sup>207</sup> Saldarini sees the excommunication of the Matthean group by the leaders from the *local* synagogues, but not in general from the main Jewish community.<sup>208</sup> If we define Judaism as observance of the Law as reflected in the First Gospel, it will be possible to place Matthew's community within Judaism. But this would raise the question: Does Judaism accept Jesus as the Messiah? In this regard, it is clear that Judaism rejects Jesus as the Messiah which would lead to dislocating the Matthean community within Judaism, for it confesses Jesus as the Messiah.

On the one hand, if we claim Matthew's ethnic group as a Christian community, we will then need to recognize that: (1) the Matthean community is undoubtedly law-

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<sup>205</sup> Stanton believes that Matthew wrote his Gospel for a cluster of Christian communities probably in Syria, see his work, 1992, 378; but I have argued that the First Gospel is most probably written for a Christian community in Antioch, see this work, 3. 2 locating the Gospel.

<sup>206</sup> Already cited in this work, see 185-6.

<sup>207</sup> Already cited in this work, see 179-80.

<sup>208</sup> Cited in this work, see 180-2.

observant Christian<sup>209</sup> which was quite different from the law-free Pauline Christianity of the early church; (2) and also the law-observant Matthean Christianity is different from today's understanding of the Christian church which accepts Jesus as the Messiah but does not observe Jewish practice and beliefs as did the Matthean community; for instance, observance of Sabbath laws, purity law, etc. Thus, from a theological point of view the Matthean community may be called neither purely Christian nor Jewish, but a sect which accepts Jesus as the Messiah at the same time observing the traditions and practice of Judaism, except circumcision which is an open debate.<sup>210</sup>

From a sociological perspective the Matthean community was a separated group, which forged its own way of Life-Setting as a new ethnic group (ἔθνος) in the Graeco-Roman world. They might be identified as a Christian community at the initial stage (cf. Acts 11:26), but by the time of the Gospel writing their identity as Christian would probably be diminished as they turned more closely towards Judaism by law - observance and Jewish practice.

It appears to be most likely that the Matthean ethnic group had sociologically been separated from the mainstream Jewish body; but theologically still debated whether it was within Judaism or separated theologically as well. It is clear that the Matthean community is a distinctive group, distinct from the mainstream of Judaism by virtue of confessing Jesus as the Messiah, at the same time distinct from Pauline

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<sup>209</sup> See this work 138-50 for Teaching on the Law, Teaching on Purity and Food Laws, Teaching on Sabbath Law and Sabbath Observance.

<sup>210</sup> I have argued for the probability of circumcision practised in Matthew's community, see 150-63 of this work, but in relation to the present issue in this section it is here left an open question.

Christianity by the virtue of observing most of Jewish traditional laws and religious practice.

Finally, from the persecution of the parent body and the Gentile world is also seen that Matthew attempted to legitimate his new ethnic group as the true Israel and to obtain a solid group cohesion (cf. Mt. 18-5-19). As Coser states that 'group boundaries are established through conflict with the outside, so that a group defines itself by struggling with other groups.'<sup>211</sup> Matthew draws boundaries around his group by making community rules and regulations in order to legitimate his movement and maintain a solid group cohesion. Most of his community rules are basically adopted from his Jewish background and we will analyse those rules and regulations in relation to ethnicity in the following chapter.

#### **4. 3 Judaism in the Day of Matthew and the Matthean Community**

##### *Introduction*

We have critically examined the ethnic background of the Matthean community from different angles and the relationship between Matthew's group and the dominant Jewish community from different perspectives in the preceding sections. It is now essential to investigate the place of the Matthean community in the day of Matthew and the role of Matthew in his church. We will look at sketchily (1) Judaism of Matthew's day, (2) formative Judaism, and (3) the role of Matthew and his relationship with the church of Antioch in this section.

#### 4. 3. 1 *Sectarianism in the late First Century and the Matthean Community*

A concise description of Judaism at the time of the emergence of the Matthean community is essential in order to better understand the Matthean Gospel. This will help us to grasp the Gospel of Matthew and enable us to place the Matthean community most appropriately in the socio-religious environment of the Graeco-Roman world of the late first century. The late second Temple period is often referred to as one of factionalism and sectarianism.<sup>212</sup> In fact Judaism was fragmented into sects and factional groups towards the end of the Second Temple period. The time after the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem saw a major change in Judaism. Those events of 70 CE became a turning point of Judaism in its transition from a Temple cult covenantal religion to rabbinic Judaism based on the study of Torah, culminating in the production of the Mishnah. However, this rabbinic form of Judaism only gradually gained influence and power over the following century. The time between the end of the Second Temple period (70 CE) and the time when rabbinic Judaism gained control over Judaism was a period of transition in Judaism from sectarianism to consolidation. It was during this period of formative Judaism that Matthew's group came into existence.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Coser, 1956, 87.

<sup>212</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, 'Interpretation and the Tendency to Sectarianism: An Aspect of Second Temple History,' in E. P. Sanders ed., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, vol. II: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period*, (London: SCM Press, 1981), 1-26; Cohen, 1989, 214-31; also 124-73; L. Schiffman, 'Jewish Sectarianism in the Second Temple Times,' in R. Jospe and S. Wagner eds., *Great Schisms in Jewish History*, (New York: KTAV, 1981), 1-46; cf. Overmann, 1990, 9-16 and Sim, 1998, 109-113.

<sup>213</sup> We have dealt with the issue of dating the Gospel of Matthew and concluded that the Gospel was composed in its final form in about 85-90 CE, see this work 83-95.

<sup>215</sup> Sim, 1998, 113.



Formative Judaism during the period of Matthew, the author of the First Gospel, witnessed several movements struggling to gain more influence and control in post 70 CE. It was a process of development within Judaism with efforts to formulate a new Judaism post - 70 as well as reactions to such attempts. It was a time for the reorganization and consolidation of Judaism as Jews attempted to restore the Jewish faith after the disaster of the first Jewish war.<sup>214</sup> At the time of Matthew formative Judaism was not in its culminating stage but in its infancy. No one group wholly controlled the entire body of Judaism nor represented the whole Jewish community.

The renewal of Judaism focused mostly on the Torah and this made the Pharisees well qualified to take leadership, for the Pharisees had already placed their focus on the study of the Torah prior to the destruction of the temple. Scribes were also in the front line in formative Judaism since their expertise in the Law helped them to contribute on a major scale to the movement. Thus these two groups, the Pharisees and scribes, were clearly seen as the majority groups, taking the ruling part in the process of the renewal of Judaism, something reflected frequently in the gospel of Matthew where the evangelist and his group attack them (the Pharisees and scribes). There were also other groups such as the representatives of the priests, the nobility and others alongside the Pharisees and scribes taking part in this major change of perspective. In fact, many of the developments contained in the first Gospel are in response to the impact that the reorganization and consolidation of Judaism had on people within the Matthean community and their world.

In many ways formative Judaism was a precursor of rabbinic Judaism which eventually became dominant within Judaism. However, it should not be thought that

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formative Judaism and rabbinic Judaism are synonymous, for the latter began to emerge around the end of the second century CE.<sup>215</sup> To discuss Judaism further in Matthew's day, Cohen's work is noteworthy and we will follow it in regards to this particular issue.<sup>216</sup> He states that Judaism after 70 CE was not marked as purely sectarianism because sectarian groups virtually disappeared from the historical record. The absence of records about sectarian groups may suggest several explanations: either sectarianism ceased, as such groups and their leaders were suppressed and killed during the war of 66-70 and the destruction of the Temple; or evidence of the existence of such groups was suppressed or lost. Most of our literature on Judaism for some centuries following the Temple destruction was written by the rabbis. They wrote about themselves and their movement, not their opponents. With the exception of the Qumran scrolls, most of our historical records towards the end of the Second Temple period, for instance, Philo, Josephus, apocalypses, pseudepigraphic literature, were preserved by the Christian Church. The increasing distance, probably separation in some localities, between Judaism and Christianity at the beginning of the second century gives the impression that the Christian Church was reluctant to retain Jewish writings in their literary treasury. From this viewpoint we may argue that our lack of evidence about the continuing existence of sects after the 70 CE was due to the negligence of the rabbis to write about non-rabbinic movements and the reluctance of the Christian Church to preserve materials relating to Judaism after the separation of the Church and Judaism; it is not necessary to suppose that either the sectarian groups or their literature disappeared immediately after the Second Temple period. It is very

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<sup>215</sup> Overman, 1990, 2-3. This is only the definition of the term formative Judaism, for fuller discussion of formative Judaism, please see this essay 204-7.

likely that the sectarian groups still continued during the period of formative Judaism and their final demise took place long after 70 CE. However, this is only a possibility.<sup>217</sup>

Cohen states that the evidence so far available indicates that with the exception of Samaritans and Jewish Christians, sects disappeared after 70 CE. He argues that during the war of 66-70 the Romans abolished the revolutionary sectarian groups: the Zealots, the Sicarii, the Fourth Philosophy; and the Qumran community was exterminated in 68 CE.<sup>218</sup> However, the extermination of revolutionary groups by the Romans during the war should not necessarily mean the abolition of all sectarian groups of Judaism. Cohen himself states that while the war severely reduced the number of the Sadducees they seemed to be still in existence after 70 CE.<sup>219</sup> It is very likely that most of the groups destroyed by the war with the Romans were the political revolutionary groups only, and that other groups which were formed purely for religious purposes were left reasonably intact. Cohen also admits that after the second Temple period at least the Samaritans and Jewish Christians were clearly existing alongside proto-rabbinic forms of Judaism.<sup>220</sup> Since Jewish Christians, for example Matthew and his group, were largely regarded as a Jewish Christian sect within Judaism, it is right to say that sectarianism did not entirely disappear with the end of the Second Temple period. Thus, we may deduce that (1) the war 66-70 exterminated many of the sectarian groups but did not see the total demise of sectarianism; (2) even if other sects disappeared after 70 CE, it is clear that Samaritans and Jewish Christians

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<sup>216</sup> See Cohen, 1989, 224-8.

<sup>217</sup> See the discussion of Cohen, 1989, 225.

<sup>218</sup> Cohen, 1989, 226.

<sup>219</sup> Cohen, 1989, 226.

continued to exist alongside other Jews. Matthew's community as one of the Jewish Christian groups in the late first century emerged and attacked the larger Jewish group, especially the Pharisees and the scribes.<sup>221</sup> That is to say that although many sectarian groups might have disappeared after 70, at least the Jewish Christian groups in different places came alongside formative Judaism.

After 70 CE, in Cohen's view, the sects disappeared but there was significant diversity among the Jewish people in regards to belief and practice.<sup>222</sup> Since some sectarian groups (i.e. at least the Samaritans and the Christian Jews) still continued alongside proto-rabbinic forms of Judaism after 70, although much reduced, and there was diversity within the larger Jewish community, Saldarini is right in saying that the late first-and second-century Judaism was less a finished product or coherent community and more a group of communities within a varied and changing tradition. It was moving toward the unified and relatively stable Talmudic system of later centuries<sup>223</sup>. Matthew and his group were in competition with the dominant group during this period of transformation of Judaism in the late first century. The question how far the Matthean group was a sect of Judaism we shall discuss briefly now and in more detail in the following sections.

In order to identify whether Matthew's group is a sect or not, we will firstly discuss the definition of a sect and its characteristics. Cohen simply defines, 'A sect is a small, organised group that separates itself from a larger religious body and asserts that it alone embodies the ideals of the larger group because it alone understands

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<sup>220</sup> Cohen, 1989, 225.

<sup>221</sup> See my argument in this work, 163-71 and elsewhere.

<sup>222</sup> See Cohen, 1989, 225-6.

<sup>223</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 15.

God's will'.<sup>224</sup> He further explains that a sect must be small enough to be a distinctive part of a larger religious body and if it grows to the extent of a larger body in its own right, then it is no longer a sect but a religion or a church. In view of Cohen's definition and explanation the Matthean group was qualified to be a sect of the time of the writing of the Gospel, since it was most likely tiny enough in comparison to its parent body from which it separated and yet it claimed to be the righteous community who did the will of God. In time over the later decades and centuries, it became large enough to be a church. Furthermore, Overman suggests three characteristics of this sectarianism which identify a sect from its parent body. Firstly, the language of hostility used by the sects is a mark of its sectarianism. Members of the sect considering themselves as the righteous people and standing on the side of God used terms such as 'the righteous, the people of God, the true Israel' etc. to describe themselves and applied the terms of 'sinners, descendants of evil', etc. to its parent body (4 *Ezra* 7:17, 51; 9:14). Often these righteous groups are contrasted with the wicked or ungodly people (8:48; 15:23). This sectarian language in the first place is a description of themselves from their own point of view. They see themselves as the righteous, the justified and the like. Secondly, Jewish sects in this period attacked their parent body with strong and hostile terms, depicting them as godless people living in lawlessness and apostasy, and as persecutors of the righteous i. e. the sectarian group, (2 *Baruch* 64:2; 4 *Ezra* 8:1, 3, 59; 9:15; cf. Mt. 3:7; 12:34; Ch. 23). This indicates the sect's intention to legitimate its new group by denouncing the parent body's leadership. Thirdly, there is the self-claim of the smaller groups of Judaism that they were the only people who upheld the Torah according to the

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<sup>224</sup> Cohen, 1989, 125.

standard of its requirements, while the people outside of their community were habitually disobedient and corrupted. In fact, at certain points and in many cases the sectarian groups developed different interpretations and applications of Torah. This difference in interpretation of the Torah between the parent or the larger group and the smaller sectarian groups created a boundary between the two parties.<sup>225</sup> This, however, does not mean that the sects were entirely different from their parent body; they shared many things in common. L. M. White defines the term in a simple way: 'a deviant or separatist movement within a cohesive and religiously defined dominant culture...despite expressed hostilities and exclusivism, the sect shares the basic constellation of beliefs or 'world view' of the dominant cultural idioms.'<sup>226</sup>

In conclusion considering Matthew and his group in the setting of late first century Judaism, one can see how the Gospel displays the three characteristics of a Jewish sect, which we have described above. For instance, the evangelist used hostile languages such as persecutors to describe the dominant group (Mt. 10:23, 24:9, 5:11, 5:44); strong language to attack the parent body (Mt. 3:7, 12:34) and the fierce attacks on the scribes and the Pharisees in chapter 23. Furthermore, there are the claims that they were the only group that upheld the Torah according to the required standard of their interpretation (Mt. 5:17-20). Such anti-Jewish polemics suggest strongly that it was the intention of the evangelist to legitimate his sectarian group as a new people of God.<sup>227</sup> In support of this hypothesis Stanton has also demonstrated that many of the sectarian elements we find in the life of the Qumran community are

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<sup>225</sup> Overman, 1990, 16-19; cf. Sim, 1998, 110-111; also Sim, 1996b, 37-9.

<sup>226</sup> White, 1988, 14.

<sup>227</sup> This issue, relationship between the Matthean community and its parent body has been dealt with in more detail elsewhere in this work, see 163-96.

paralleled in the Gospel of Matthew,<sup>228</sup> and that the comparison of the two groups indicates that they were fragmented sects.

#### 4.3.2 *Formative Judaism*

The destruction of the Temple in 70 CE was followed by the loss of the authority of the priests and of national control in Palestine. When the Temple was destroyed Judaism could no longer continue its Temple-centred religious life; it led to confusion and competition for Roman favour and authority. After the destruction of the Temple authority remained more in the hands of the local parties, that is, the village elders, wealthy families, local priests, and landlords and popular leaders.<sup>229</sup> Many Jewish people retained their faith and religion under the leadership of factional groups at the local level.

On the other hand, it was also the beginning of consolidation. In addition to the factionism within the larger Jewish community the loss of Temple-centred religion and national authority led the Jewish people into a great confusion within Judaism. It forced the Jewish nation to search for an alternative form of Judaism and to create other forms of definitive symbols which would represent the nation and embrace the Jewish people as far as possible. In search of an alternative form of Judaism, since Temple-centred religion was no longer possible, the new form of Judaism demanded that it should be a Torah centred religion; which means that the study of the Law should be the centre of the religion.

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<sup>228</sup> Stanton, 1992, 85-107. Stanton does not believe that the Matthean community was a sect within Judaism, he argues that Matthew and his group were a new Christian group. There is a consensus that the Matthean group had separated at least locally from the larger Jewish community but the dispute is whether the Matthean group was a sect within Judaism or they should be called a Christian community.

The fact that the Pharisees had practised a form of religious life based on the household and the study of Torah prior to the Jewish war made it easier for them to survive after the destruction of the Temple<sup>230</sup>. The Pharisees and the scribes were proud of their expertise in the study of Torah and its application to their contemporary society. They were not conservative in their interpretation of the Law; they reinterpreted the Law in the light of the changing world and applied it to their contemporary society and current issues in a way which was widely accepted and which made them popular in their Jewish society. Since the practice of studying the Law met the need of the day, their expertise in the study of the Torah and in interpreting it with applications to their changing society made the Pharisees and their partners, like the scribes, best qualified to lead the people and they soon became prominent leaders in the later period of Judaism known as formative Judaism. The term 'formative Judaism' was first and foremost introduced by Jacob Neusner;<sup>231</sup> it was adopted by Overman and others in recent studies.<sup>232</sup> It means the reorganization and consolidation of Judaism in the time following the first Jewish war. This formative Judaism aimed to rescue the Jewish faith from the disaster caused by the war and destruction of the Temple.

Once the Pharisees and the scribes began to take the leadership in formative Judaism, old order of Temple sacrifice was replaced by the study of the Torah, and the gathering in the Temple was now replaced by gathering around the Torah. Josephus stated that the Pharisees were considered to be the most accurate interpreters of the

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<sup>229</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 13.

<sup>230</sup> See Sim, 1998, 113-4.

<sup>231</sup> J. Neusner, 'The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism: Yavneh from A. D. 70-100,' in *ANRW* II. 19.2, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979), 3-42.



Law in his day (*Ant* 17:41; *J. W.* 2:162; cf. Acts 22:3; 26:5). Sim comments that this fact was the ultimate reason for the success of formative Judaism<sup>233</sup> and made them the prominent and dominant majority group in the spectrum of formative Judaism. In formative Judaism the coalition seems to include other groups as suggested by Sim.<sup>234</sup> Despite the possibility of other groups having a place within formative Judaism alongside the Pharisees and the scribes, nonetheless, Pharisees and the scribes were the leading two parties against whom the evangelist had to make counter-attacks throughout his Gospel. The evangelist's statement that the scribes and the Pharisees sit on the seat of Moses indicates the fact that they were the two dominant parties within formative Judaism at the time of the evangelist.

The major focus of formative Judaism was the study of Torah but the Pharisees added oral tradition - the tradition of the elders which can be divided into two parts: the normal interpretations of the biblical commandments and the peculiarly Pharisaic rules. This latter, the Pharisaic rules, which do not have a clear basis in the scriptures,<sup>235</sup> the evangelist rejects in his community rules.<sup>236</sup> For the Pharisees the tradition of the elders had the utmost authority, but for Matthew such authority lay only with the written Mosaic Law. The Sadducees and the Qumran Community too rejected the Pharisaic rules, (Josephus, *Ant* 13:297-8). These features indicate that the Pharisees and the scribes were the dominant party in the period of formative Judaism and that they exercised a considerable measure of control over the wider Jewish community from which other sectarian groups (like the Matthean group) split.

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<sup>232</sup> Overman, 1990, 35-71; see also Sim, 1998, 113.

<sup>233</sup> See Sim, 1998, 113.

<sup>234</sup> Sim suggests that in addition to Pharisees and the scribes, representatives of the priesthood and the nobility would probably have been included in formative Judaism, see Sim, 1998, 113.

Therefore, in this thesis whenever we refer to the term ‘the mainstream Jewish community,’ or ‘the larger Jewish community’ or ‘the dominant group’ we refer to the form of Judaism in which the Pharisees and the scribes were apparently the dominant parties with whom the evangelist and his group disputed. Sometimes we use the term ‘the parent body’ for the same purpose to mean the same group since apparently Matthew and his group split from this majority group.

This formative Judaism was a bridge between the pre-70 CE Judaism and the later rabbinic period which gained its dominance and controlling power over the synagogues in the later centuries only. At the time of the writing of the Gospel of Matthew, this period of formative Judaism was just beginning. The Pharisees and scribes did not yet dominate the Jewish world in the day of Matthew but other Jewish groups, including the Matthean community, laid claim to the leadership of the parent body such that they conflicted with the new coalition of formative Judaism. In Antioch of Syria, this formative Judaism appeared to have been consolidated by the time of the writing of the Gospel of Matthew and certainly it conflicted with Matthew’s group. The new groups of Judaism attempted to gain the support of the Jewish people but eventually fell either by wayside or were absorbed into formative Judaism.

#### ***4.4 Matthew’s role and relationship with the church of Antioch***

Despite the great interest of many scholars in the study of Matthew’s Gospel in recent scholarship, relatively few give close attention to authorship. Even those who

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<sup>235</sup> See Sim, 1998, 114.

<sup>236</sup> For example, Mt. 5:20; for more detail discussion see my argument in this thesis, 138-42.

deal with the authorship of the Gospel concentrate mostly on the question of the author's ethnic origin, that is to say, whether the author was a Jew or a Gentile?<sup>237</sup> The available evidence does not allow us to identify the author in person. Nevertheless, it is essential to discuss the position or the role of the author in his community at the time the Gospel was written.

There was a gap of one or more generations between the time of Paul's departure from Antioch after the incident in early 50s and the time of the Gospel composition c. 85-90<sup>238</sup> which indicates the possibility of changes in the church within one or two generations. Obviously the 70 CE events, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, would have caused certain changes in the life of the church. In 70 CE there was a conference of rabbis at Yavneh (Greek: Jamnia) town, west-northwest of Jerusalem, which set up a council for reforming Judaism known as the Jamnia movement.<sup>239</sup> The Jamnia (Yabneh) movement tried to unite different sects of Judaism and intended to impose a certain amount of uniformity on Judaism. It would give the Jewish Christians an option: either to leave the synagogue and separate completely from Judaism or to remain faithful in Judaism. It was the time when both entities (church and synagogue) were in a process of self-definition and consolidation; especially the church was struggling to legitimate its movement. These factors caused tensions between the two bodies, such that the church, being a tiny minority group in

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<sup>237</sup> Abel tried to identify the author in person and concluded that Matthew, the disciple of the Lord wrote some part of the Gospel, mostly the sayings of Jesus probably in Hebrew which he called the M1 source, but the final edition was made by an unknown person in Antioch; see Abel, *NTS* 17, (1970-71), 138-71. Other scholars who deal with authorship but tackle only the question of the author's ethnic origin are: Clark, *JBL* 66, (1947) 165-72; Gundry, 1982, 609-22; Luz, 1990, 93-95. Meier, 1979; Christensen, 1958; Strecker, 1971. I have dealt with the issue of the author's ethnic background above and concluded that it was written by a Jewish author, see this thesis, 100-111.

<sup>238</sup> See this work, 83-95.

<sup>239</sup> Cohen, 1989, 227.

the Graeco-Roman world, came under persecution (Mt. 5:10,12, 10:23; 23:37; 24:9).<sup>240</sup>

It is also likely that the church at Antioch had internal conflicts caused by external affairs. In the preceding section we have already discussed the visit of some Christians from Jerusalem and the incident at Antioch on which occasion the church accepted the proposal of the teachers from Jerusalem (Gal. 2); and we concluded that this incident became the turning point of the church in its life and history. The conservative Jewish Christians, who did not want to share table-fellowship with the uncircumcised Gentile converts, were probably largely leading the church, as reflected in the texts relating to Jewish mission, (Mt. 10:5-6; 15:24) and other texts that stress observance of the Mosaic Law (Mt. 5:21-24, 27-29; 6:7-8; 23:2-3). On the other hand, we have passages which support the Gentile mission (Mt. 28:16-20), while rejecting the Pharisees and their practice (Mt. 15:12-14; 23:2-36), criticising Pharisaic devotion (Mt. 6:1-6, 16-18), and also criticising the Jewish tradition of taking oaths and vows (Mt. 5:33-37). Meier suggests therefore that there was another group of people in the church, i. e. liberal Jewish Christians who were ready to compromise and maintain table fellowship with Gentile converts by observance of the four kosher rules in Acts 15.<sup>241</sup> There might be individuals or groups who were more liberal towards Gentile converts and willing to compromise to a certain degree. However, the church as a whole, was formed largely by a Jewish majority who intended to restrict the mission to the house of Israel only, and another smaller group who were in favour of

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<sup>240</sup> Cf. Meier, 1983, 48.

<sup>241</sup> Meier, 1983, 50-51.

Gentile entry and tried to encourage universal mission (28:16-20) at the time of writing the Gospel.

The evangelist composed his Gospel in the midst of these conflicts within the church, under the persecution of the Jews and the authorities. These conflicts and issues were the pastoral and theological problems that the church faced within, and in such a situation the author wrote his Gospel in order to meet those needs of the church and to defend the church as an exponent. Therefore, the text is multi-faceted in that it contains a tendency (1) to embrace different traditions and synthesise them in the interests of group cohesion and unity in the church; (2) to help its members to live a high moral standard for the expected apocalyptic age, (3) to interpret the Law in the light of Jesus' teaching for his readers, (4) finally, to legitimate its movement and to establish for it a new identity as the true Israel called and planted by God through Jesus.

It is difficult to give a title to the author, whether he was a teacher, (a scribe), a prophet, a bishop or a pastor of the church at Antioch. According to Acts 13:1, the church seemed to be under the leadership of prophets and teachers during the apostolic period. In the text of the Gospel we have passages which indicate that there were prophets, wise men, and scribes (23:34). It is, therefore, possible that the author was a scribe who was competent in literature and able to edit and compile a Gospel for a congregation. It is also possible that the author was an influential prophet who led the community. Furthermore, some of the texts of the gospel, for instance, Mt. 16:18-19, where the author portrayed Peter as the chief Rabbi of the universal church with power to make decision in matters of conduct suggest that the author was very likely to be the

overseer of the church who admired Peter and was perhaps serving as the chief authority of the Antiochene church at the time of writing the Gospel.

With regards to Matthew's position it is appropriate to investigate further his portrayal of Peter. For this issue we follow Sim's discussion at certain points.<sup>242</sup> The Marcan Gospel clearly portrays Peter's role as the head of the disciples, the twelve, by listing his name first (Mk. 3:16-19); and he was portrayed as the spokesman of the twelve and the one who recognised Jesus' messiahship (Mk. 8:29, 32; 9:5)). On certain occasions Peter spoke on behalf of the disciples (Mk. 10:28), and at times he seemed to be most intimate with Jesus (Mk. 11:21), and most faithful at least in his words of promise (14:29). Peter was among the four pillars of the disciples with whom Jesus talked privately (Mk. 13:3) and his name is always given first on all occasions in Mark's Gospel where he is listed alongside others. Interestingly Matthew adopted his Marcan source and redacted it to portray Peter as the leader of the twelve, the head of the church universal, and the teacher who transmits the teachings of Jesus (Mt. 16:16-22, cf. Mk. 8:29,32; Mt. 17:4, cf. Mk. 9:5; Mt. 19:27, cf. Mk. 10:28; Mt. 26:33, cf. Mk. 14:29). In the Marcan Gospel it was the disciples who posed the question (the messiahship of Jesus) but Matthew edited it so that it was Peter who spoke as the mouthpiece of the disciples (Mk. 7:17 cf. Mt. 15:15). In an incident not taken from his Marcan source, Matthew has Jesus and Peter as the major characters in the discussion of payment of the Temple tax (Mt. 17:24-27). Most importantly Matthew portrayed Peter as the rock on which the church is built, and he was authorised with power to bind or to loose on earth with reciprocal effect in heaven (Mt. 16:18-19). To summarize, Matthew portrayed Peter as the supreme authority of the church,

the overseer, and also as the rabbi who preserves and transmits the teachings of Jesus.<sup>243</sup> It gives the impression that the author was the overseer of the church at Antioch so that he portrayed Peter with high esteem in seeking to support to his position in his congregation as the successor of Peter in the church in Antioch, claiming authority to administer the teachings of Jesus and to exercise authority over the church.

While Matthew is clearly law-observant and stands faithfully in the Petrine tradition, he does not appear to be a strong anti-Paulinist as some scholars, like Sim, consider.<sup>244</sup> Matthew, rather seems to stand not on the extreme anti-Paulinist wing but to mediate between the different traditions which were probably found in his church, while retaining his Petrine tradition as the principle. He takes Mark's law-free Gospel as one of his primary sources and edited it for his Jewish majority community with its Jewish roots, which suggests that Matthew was not an extreme exponent of an anti-law-free Gospel. If Matthew were a representative of an extreme anti-Pauline Christianity, then he would have not put a Gentile mission at the climax of his Gospel. The so-called the Great Commission in 28:18-20 is clearly inclusive of Gentile mission which is entirely in agreement with the Pauline Gentile mission. Moreover, if Matthew were on the extreme side of the conservative Jews in Jerusalem grouped around James, he should have given relatively greater emphasis to the ties between Jesus and his own family, whereas he played down kinship and blood ties in the episode where Jesus' family (probably his brother James and his mother included) are

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<sup>242</sup> Sim, 1998, 196-9.

<sup>243</sup> See also B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins*, (London: Macmillan, 1924), 515; Sim, 1998, 197 and literature cited there.

<sup>244</sup> Sim vigorously argues that Matthew is a strong anti-Paulinist, see Sim, 1998, 199-213.

looking for him; Matthew keeps a distance between Jesus and his family (12:46-50), which implies that he does not portray James so closely with Jesus. We may, therefore, suggest that Matthew is a law-observant Jewish Christian of the Petrine tradition but he does not appear to be a strong anti-Paulinist. If our conclusion on Matthew's position as a Jewish law-observant leader but not extreme anti-Paulinist is correct, it makes more interesting to study the rules by which he maintained his church unity. It will be now then our immediate focus to examine the requirements for entry into the Matthean community and the rules by which Matthew tried to keep group cohesion in his community.



## Chapter Five

### THE LIFE OF THE MATTHEAN COMMUNITY AND MATTHEW'S DISTINCTIVE COMMUNITY RULES IN RELATION TO ETHNICITY

#### 5.1 *Introduction:*

We concluded the preceding chapter by stating that the Matthean community is neither a form of purely Judaistic nor a Christian church like that of today for the main reason that it accepts Jesus as the expected Jewish Messiah and at the same time observes certain points of the Jewish Law; thus it seems to be right to say that Matthew's church is a distinctive community, distinct, by virtue of its belief in Jesus as Jewish Messiah, from the main Jewish body, and distinct by virtue of observing the Law, from those churches influenced by Pauline Christianity. We will analyse its distinctive community life from an ethnic perspective. We have also stated in our previous chapter that the Matthean community is a mixture of largely Jewish members with a Gentile minority which stimulates the central interest of this thesis to ask the questions: Is there any sort of racial discrimination or marginalized treatment within their community? What new rules did Matthew employ to strengthen group cohesion? and finally, Are Matthew's community rules applicable to today's ethnic issues in Burma?

Whilst searching for answers to the questions and clues for the issues, at the first stage, it is necessary to study requirements for entry into the Matthean community in relation to ethnic cultural background. In this first section we will critically examine *repentance*, *baptism*, and *circumcision* in the Gospel of Matthew relating to one's ethnic background for entry into Matthew's group. The second

section of this chapter will investigate the new group identity markers of the Matthean community which help them maintain their boundaries with the outside world. In this regard we will pay close attention to the role that attachment to the Land, attachment to the Temple, kinship and blood-ties, observance of the Sabbath, keeping purity and food laws, the issue of circumcision, and finally baptism, play in the formation of the community's new identity. Finally, in the third section, the community rules and life will be critically examined to show whether, as far as possible, there was any sort of racial discrimination and conflict within the Matthean community. While reinforcing group boundaries with the outside world in relation to both the main Jewish body and the Gentile world, Matthew interestingly opens a wider opportunity for the Gentiles. We will look at passages related to this notion.

## **5.2 Entry into the Matthean Community in Relation to Ethnicity**

### ***Introduction:***

There may be certain requirements and steps for admission to the Matthean community, for people from different cultural backgrounds. There may be theological issues too relating to entry requirements and the life of the church; for example, righteousness is a crucial topic of dispute among scholars in Matthean study;<sup>1</sup> however, this section will not deal with all those issues but will focus on matters relating to ethnicity. In other words, this section will try to answer the

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<sup>1</sup> The main debate in the issue of Matthean righteousness is the question of whether righteousness is God's demand from man or God's gift for man in Matthew's theology. Strecker in his work argues vigorously that righteousness in Matthew is certainly from man, see Georg Strecker, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. Eugene Boring, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 364-391. On the other hand, Some scholars argue that it is God's eschatological gift for man and demand of God, but the gift precedes the demand which means that the stress is more on the gift, see Przybylski, 1980, 1-2 and literature cited there.

question: Is there any discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin for entry into the Matthean community? In order to investigate the question we raise here about ethnicity and entrance to Matthew's church we will examine the issues of *repentance*, *baptism*, and *circumcision* which appear to be steps into the community. In conclusion we will look at whether any particular ethnic origin or identity is required for getting into Matthew's community.

### **5.2.1 *Repentance in relation to ethnicity and entry to the Matthean Community***

Matthew's community life is mostly based on the Jewish laws and practice, but all are interpreted for the community in the light of the teachings of Jesus and his (Jesus) life which became the principal guides; more precisely, the life of Jesus is the model for the individual's life in his community. In this case we mean to say that the baptism of Jesus is a model for the believers. Nonetheless, Jesus' baptism would not have been understood by believers as implying a need for repentance. However, there is a connection between repentance and baptism in the life process of a believer with which we will deal shortly. At this point, we would like to indicate simply that Jesus underwent baptism as a model for his followers. It is also from this angle that Matthew's Jesus began his preaching and teaching with the phrase of 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' (Mt. 4:17). This kingdom of heaven is generally interpreted as 'the rule of God' and is brought by Jesus to the hands of the Gospel hearers; and the text is plain that repentance is the initial step to get into the kingdom of heaven. Since Matthew intended his community to be the eschatological people of God who prepared themselves for the imminent coming of God's kingdom, the requirements for entering into the kingdom of heaven are presumably the step-by-step

requirements for entrance into his community. As Riches points out correctly, baptism is necessary for entry into the new group of Matthew and baptism becomes a mark of group identity (cf. 3:15, 28:19).<sup>2</sup> For the ritual practice of baptism, repentance is the initial criterion in Matthew's theology (Mt. 3:2; 3:8; 3:11; cf. 4:17; 11:20; 21:32).

In view of this, repentance is the first step for admission into the Matthean community as reflected in the preaching of Jesus at the start of his public ministry (Mt. 4:17).<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that a similar concept is found in *Jubilees* 23 where the age of blessedness enters the stage one step at a time. In the *Apocalypse of Weeks*, 1 *En.* 91.12-17; 93 the eschatological transition is a step-by-step process.<sup>4</sup>

Repentance precedes baptism as seen in the preaching of John the Baptist Mt. 3:2 and in his baptism Mt. 3:6; and so too baptism precedes the Christian life and law-observance as seen in Mt. 28:19-20 where the command to baptize comes first followed by 'teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you'. Moreover, μετανοείτε in 4:17 is imperative and precedes the other clause, which seems to significantly suggest the importance and necessity of repentance and which must take place first before all other steps such as baptism, righteousness could come. Luz argues that 'repentance' in this context of the Gospel means conversion and for Matthew it is what faith in the Gospel means.<sup>5</sup> This imperative verb form of μετανοείτε 'repent' also dominates all other similar texts in the Gospel: in the mouth of John the Baptist it is pronounced three times (Mt. 3:2, 8, 11) while Jesus speaks of

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<sup>2</sup> Riches, 2000, 222.

<sup>3</sup> See also Davies and Allison, 1988, 388-9.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. Licht, 'Time and Eschatology in Apocalyptic Literature and in Qumran', *JJS* 16 (1965), 178-9.

<sup>5</sup> Luz, 1990, 197.

it for four times (Mt. 4:17; 11:20; 11:21; 12:41; cf. Mk. 1:15; Lk. 10:13; 11:32). It is clear that at the very outset of Jesus' public ministry he opened his very first speech with the imperative μετανοείτε. It reinforces the fact, mentioned above, that repentance precedes all other ritual requirements like baptism, perhaps circumcision, etc. We can then possibly deduce that for Matthew repentance comes as the initial step with imperative force which precedes other requirements baptism, possibly circumcision and dominates the clause 'Repent, for the kingdom is at hand, ....' Luz also sees and states that 'this imperative stands as the entry gate before the soon-to-come teaching concerning the higher righteousness which is to be realized in the life of the Christian.'<sup>6</sup>

For this issue of repentance we will look at Davies and Allison<sup>7</sup> who give their explanation in comparison with the contemporaries of John the Baptist. For them salvation from the coming wrath of God is only for those who repent and show the proofs of their repentance, and that proof of repentance is characterized in bearing fruit as a metaphor for doing good work, (Mt. 3:10; Lk. 3:9; Mt. 7:16-20; 12:33; Lk. 13:6-9; cf. Jn. 15:2, 4, 5, 8, 16). In the notes of Davies and Allison the figurative use of 'fruit' in religious speech, which was popular with Jesus and perhaps with John the Baptist as well, means 'consequence' or 'act' or 'product'. It was also found outside of the Gospels (Ps. 1:3; Prov. 1:31; Isa. 3:10; Hos. 10:1; Eccles 23:25; Rom. 6:22; Jas. 3:18; Josephus, *Ant.* 20:48, cf. 18:116-19; Bar 32:1; Apoc. Adam 6:1; *b. Quid.* 40a; and even outside of Jewish and Christian literature, for example, in the Buddhist text, *Dhammapada* 5, 'Trees are judged not by their

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<sup>6</sup> Luz, 1990, 198, see also his note no. 35 and 36.

<sup>7</sup> See Davies and Allison, 1988, 305-6.

roots but by their fruits.’ John the Baptist recognizes two classes of people in the crowd who came to hear him: the repentant and the non-repentant and he calls his hearers to repent from being unfruitful trees into fruitful trees threatened by the eschatological fire (cf. Amos 3:2; 4:1-13). John denounces the idea that salvation for the Jews was granted by Abrahamic descent or any other circumstance (Mt. 8-10). In other words, John the Baptist was attacking here the validity of what most Palestinian Jews believed of covenantal nomism – namely that all Israel has a place in the world to come.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to the Pharisees, John does not seem to think that repentance is primarily a daily affair serving to maintain one’s position in a community (cf. T. Asher 1:6; *Šabb.* 153a; *t. Yoma* 5:6). For John the Baptist it seems rather to be a transition from the one group of Jews to another group as was illustrated by the chaff facing the fire and the wheat for the granary. It is very interesting to compare this with the significance of repentance in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where it signifies someone who leaves the impious Israel and enters the covenant community (*CD* 4:2; 6:4-5; 8:16; 19:16; 20:17; *1QS* 10:20; *1QH* 2:9; 14:24; *4QpPs* 37 3:1). Our comparative study of the contemporary literature and the prophetic usage of Amos helps us to see that for John repentance means a person’s transition from one group of Jews to another group. By implication, then, Matthew used this concept as marking a transition in life and technically applied it as a step for entry into his community from the one Jewish mainstream group. Repentance in the Greek word literally means, ‘change of mind’ and in the Hebrew it stands for ‘turn around’, ‘return’, and suggests a complete change of conduct. When Matthew employs this word in the Gospel, it seems to apply first to the Gentiles. For the Gentiles he would

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<sup>8</sup> Sanders, 1977, 33-428.

mean that they need to repent from their idol worship, from their lawlessness, from their pagan culture and sin. In this Gentile context, 'repentance' would mean conversion from a pagan way of life to following Jesus and his teaching. In a Jewish context Matthew meant them to recover their old way of life in the light of Jesus' teaching. They would turn from their stubborn hearts and also from taking for granted that membership of the covenant which would assure their salvation; (cf. Mt. 3:9). The Jews needed to repent of their stubbornness and recover their former way of life, but this may not imply a strict conversion in the same sense as the Gentiles. The fact that Mark closely links conversion and discipleship in his Gospel cannot be unrelated to the fact that the majority of his congregation was Gentile, whereas Matthew does not stress the link between conversion and discipleship, but rather links discipleship with instruction, teaching, and mission discourse in his Gospel as he wrote for a majority Jewish congregation which did not need conversion as the Gentiles did.

There is no indication of any ethnic discrimination in regard to repentance as a criterion for entry to the Matthean community, both Jews and Gentiles seem to be required to repent at different levels and degrees. A Gentile needs to repent from his pagan culture and faith and convert to Jesus' teaching. A Jew need not convert but needs to repent of his/her stubbornness, reliance on their descent and covenantal nomism, and negligence of Jesus as the expected Jewish Messiah. The frequent saying of the Matthean Jesus, 'You have heard it said,...but I say to you...' means the Jews depend on what they had heard in the past, but Jesus did not see it sufficient. He warns them to repent from their dependence on their descent, their reliance on covenantal nomism, but turn to his teaching and accept him as the expected Jewish

Messiah. Regardless of ethnic origins all had to repent from their own position and turn to Jesus and his teaching in order that one may join the Matthean community.

### 5.2.2 *Baptism in relation to ethnicity and entry to the Matthean Community*

Repentance and baptism appear to be two important consecutive features for entering into the Matthean group. As we have stated above repentance must come first before any other ritual performance. In any case, baptism takes place immediately after repentance (Mt. 3:2-6; cf. 3:11); repentance, according to this text, results in the confession of sins, and only those who repent of their sins should be baptized.<sup>9</sup> John the Baptist refused many of the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to him for baptism because of their unrepentant hearts (Mt. 3:7-10).

With regard to baptism, most scholars pay attention to the text in Mt. 28:18-20 and there is a division among contemporary scholars. One group of scholars argues that baptism was practised for Gentile converts in place of circumcision, while on the other hand, a few scholars argue that baptism did not replace circumcision but it was introduced in addition to circumcision.<sup>10</sup> In my argument cited here, I try to draw our

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<sup>9</sup> In this case our focus is on the baptism of believers, not of Jesus. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:13-17) and his baptism presumably would not be the result of confession of sin for we assume that Jesus, the Son of God, the anointed Messiah, would have no ground to confess sin, and presumably his baptism is a model for his followers. It also may have different meaning from the baptism of the disciples. H. J. Holtzmann sees a great significance in the baptism of Jesus and he believes that Jesus' messianic life begins at the baptism, see H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker* HC 1, Tübingen, 1901, 7ff; see also W. Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, (English trans. Cambridge/London: 1971), 11ff; and Heikki Räisänen, *The 'Messianic secret' in Mark*, (trans. Christopher Tuckett, ed. John Riches, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 39. There are other opinions and theories about the relationship between the baptism and the messianic life of Jesus; this is one example to show that the baptism of Jesus is different from others and his baptism is not the consequence of repentance of sin at all.

<sup>10</sup> Riches and some other scholars think that circumcision was not practised in Matthean community. On the one hand, Sim and others argue that circumcision must be included in the package of 'teaching them all I have commanded you' in Mt. 28:20. I argue also that if circumcision was not done and only



attention back to the baptism of Jesus. For Matthew and his community, Jesus is the expected Jewish Messiah; they commit themselves to follow his teaching and his life as strictly as possible. With this viewpoint if Jesus saw fit to be baptized by John the Baptist, it is quite likely that the followers, from the Matthean community, both Jews and Gentiles, would have practised the ritual of baptism, as following in the footsteps of Jesus.<sup>11</sup> Jesus, being Jewish and consequently circumcised (Lk. 2:22), was still baptized in order that all righteousness could be fulfilled (Mt. 3:15). There is certainly a difference between the baptism of Jesus (3:15) and that of the disciples of John the Baptist (3:6). In the baptism of Jesus there is no indication that it was proof of repentance, but rather, he did it in order that all righteousness may be fulfilled. But in the baptism of the crowds it is clearly indicated that they confessed their sins (3:6).

In the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) unlike any of the other commandments and laws only baptism is singled out significantly, 'make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you....' In this text there is no indication that repentance is necessary in order to be baptized. However, it is possible that the command to 'make disciples' with its subordinate phrases refers to preaching the kingdom of God and repentance from sin as expressed in the ministry of John the Baptist (Mt.3:2). Mt. 3:11 seems to support the hypothesis of baptism as proof of repentance: 'I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the

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baptism was practised in this regard, the opponents of Matthew would have pointed out their attack against Jesus and his followers, see this thesis 150-5; 155-161.

<sup>11</sup> Once we believe that the Matthean community is followers of Jesus, it is then conceivable that they followed the practice of their master Jesus.

Holy Spirit and with fire' (cf. Mk. 1:8, Mark does not have 'with fire'). In this text we see that the baptism of John is for proof of repentance.

Another alternative is that Christian baptism should be seen as a formula of the early church which is indicated in the commandment (28:19). If we read Mt. 28:19 in the light of Mt. 3:13-17 as following the example of Jesus (*imitatio Christi*)<sup>12</sup> 'imitation of Christ' then the baptism of Jesus would not contain repentance (Mt. 3:17). Yet it seems to stand as a model for his followers. In this case we would like to reaffirm our proposal that baptism was early church tradition, but did not always have the idea of repentance attached to it, especially in the case of Jesus' baptism. When we compare this text (Mt. 28:19) with its interesting parallel in Mk. 16:16, there is agreement between the two texts; both of them speak about baptism but without any mention of repentance. Both link it to the preaching to all the nations; however, Matthew in the baptismal formula, links baptism to the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but Mark does not.

For John the Baptist and his disciples, repentance and baptism were consecutive factors, and for Matthew and his members baptism could mean one of either two things: (1) it could mean proof of repentance<sup>13</sup>, or (2) after the model of the baptism of Jesus. Thus the baptism of Jesus himself before he began his public ministry, the baptism of the crowds by John the Baptist for repentance, and the post-resurrection teaching of Jesus, although they differ slightly in details, all stress the importance of baptism which gives the clear impression that baptism is a standard ritual requirement for entry into the new group of Matthew. The baptism of Jesus

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<sup>12</sup> See also Davies and Allison, 1997, 685.

strongly suggests that baptism was required for Jews as well in entering to Matthew's community. If our conclusion is correct, it is then safe to say that baptism was a standard ritual requirement for entry into the Matthean community for both Jews and Gentiles regardless of their ethnic origins.

### ***5. 2. 3 Circumcision in relation to ethnicity and entry to the Matthean community***

There is no scholarly consensus about the issue of circumcision in the First Gospel. There are at least three questions which could be raised: (1) Was circumcision undergone only by the Jews in the Matthean community? (2) Was it required for both Jews and Gentile converts? Or (3) was circumcision not practised at all in the Matthean community? We have dealt with the issue earlier in our work and given our argument in favour of the notion that circumcision was practised on all males (both Jews and Gentiles) in the Matthean community.<sup>14</sup> Even if Gentile converts were exempted from circumcision, the Jews at least had undergone the ritual practice of circumcision. However, a further question arises from this hypothesis, that all male members (Jews and Gentiles) were circumcised in Matthew's group: at what stage were Gentile converts circumcised? Was it done after their baptism or before?

Despite the difficulties in answering the questions raised above, throughout this essay we have worked with the concept of the Jewishness of Matthew and his community. In all our arguments we find it convincing that the author of the Gospel himself was a Jew, that and he stressed the Jewishness of himself and of his

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<sup>13</sup> We suppose this on the basis that the evangelist portrayed John who baptized as proof of repentance except in the case of Jesus, it is likely that the evangelist took John as a model to some extent.

members. Moreover, when the Matthean text says, 'For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven,' it implies that if the scribes and Pharisees practised circumcision, the Matthean community should do more than them. Further, the text depicts the danger of relaxing any law, 'Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven....' (Mt. 5:19). If anyone relaxes the least of the commandments he or she shall be called the least in heaven. It is then unlikely that Matthew himself would have omitted circumcision which is one of the surest signs for Jewish ethnic identity throughout history. The First Gospel has 'the kingdom of heaven' as a central theme of the Gospel which gives the impression that the community he founded would probably be intended as a rehearsal for the life in heaven and the members are the eschatological people as suggestively indicated in the Lord's prayer (Mt. 6:10). In the light of the kingdom concept, it is again unlikely that a conservative Jewish leader would neglect this very important facet of circumcision in the life of a Jewish congregation. Therefore, as we have argued, the silence over circumcision in the Gospel seems to suggest rather that the male members in the community underwent this ritual practice of circumcision so that their Jewish opponents had no grounds to attack them and that the evangelist subsequently did not need to justify his group in respect of circumcision. Although it is only a probability, there is logically a possibility that Matthew might have required his Gentile converts to be circumcised in order that they (the Gentiles) might be accepted in equality with their fellow Jews in the community; and the opponents might not have any grounds to attack on the

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life of the community from a legal point of view. If the Gentile converts in Matthew's church were not circumcised, it is very likely that the Jews in the community would not want to share meals or join the table fellowship with those uncircumcised Gentiles, as unclean people, because we have seen evidence to believe that the Matthean community practised Jewish laws, tradition, and custom in which the Jews did not share table fellowship with the uncircumcised. Moreover, since Matthew intends his community to be an eschatological people living in harmony with one another, it is very likely that he would have required the Gentile converts to be circumcised for group harmony with their fellow Jewish members in their community life as we also see Matthew's emphasis on family – norms: brothers, sisters, mother-son, Father-son. This does not ignore the importance of descent for Matthew, as he begins his Gospel with the genealogy of Jesus, rather the notion of circumcision for Matthew's group gives more emphasis on its Jewishness.

#### **5.2.4 Conclusion:**

Considering the requirements and steps for entering into the Matthean community, it is possible to conclude that some of the factors and ethnic identity markers in first century Diaspora Judaism such as (1) kinship and blood ties, (2) attachment to the Land of Palestine, (3) attachment to the Temple in Jerusalem<sup>15</sup> are no longer significant in the Gospel of Matthew; they are abandoned in the life of the Matthean community. Instead, repentance is the initial step and baptism seems to be the confirmation of admission to the community. We do not have evidence to claim for sure that the disciples practised baptism for themselves or for others, but it is very

likely that both Jews and Gentiles practised baptism because Jesus himself, being a pure Jew, was baptised, that is to say, by implication, since the disciples looked to Jesus as the model for life, if their master was baptised, then there is no impossibility or unlikelihood that the disciples practised baptism. Circumcision is a very likely ritual practice for the Jews and it is a probable requirement for Gentile converts.

Having formed a community Matthew makes certain community rules which we shall discuss shortly. Their central aim seems to be to form a solid community by observing the Law for righteousness, committing themselves to evangelizing all the nations, and teaching all that Jesus commanded them as spelled out in 28:18-20. In the community of Matthew the people who enjoy the kingdom of God are simply those who believe and acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God. The election of the new people is not based on ethnic origin, race, colour, or any other natural identity, but they are the ones who believe in Jesus and deliberately respond to his teachings, and commit themselves to do the will of God. The distinctions of race and ethnicity become insignificant for entering into the new group. There is no discrimination in the criteria for entry to the Matthean community in relation to one's ethnic origin or culture.

The steps for entering to the new group are (1) a deliberate response to Jesus by acknowledging him as the Messiah, (2) repentance confirmed by baptism and possibly circumcision for all males, and (3) doing God's will. Commitment to their community by confessing Jesus as the Messiah and doing the will of God overshadows the natural identity of race and other ethnic boundaries at least in the initial stage of entering into the new Matthean community. Fictive kinship is given

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<sup>15</sup> See this thesis, 49-65.

paramount importance and first place in the Matthean community of the late first century. Saldarini correctly states that kinship terminology, (for instance, Father-son, brother-brother relationship, sister, mother, family ) is the dominant metaphor of Matthew for internal group relationship <sup>16</sup> in building up solidarity in their new community. Ethnic distinctions are played down as the criteria for entry into the new community.

### **5.3 Change of Identity Markers and New Markers of Matthew's Community**

The whole of chapter two of this thesis describes and analyses features of Jewish ethnic identity in Diaspora Judaism at the turn of the Christian era. At that point, factors of circumcision, blood ties and kinship, attachment to the Land, attachment to the Temple, rejection of other nations' cults, separation at meals, separation by Sabbath observation, expulsion and inclusion of membership in the synagogues of the Diaspora are the key markers.<sup>17</sup> But when we come to Matthew's community life some of the key markers of Jewish ethnic identity in Diaspora Judaism seem to be played down or at least diminished. We will now investigate those features in Matthew's Gospel.

#### **5.3.1 *Attachment to the Land in the Gospel of Matthew***

Attachment to the Land in Diaspora Judaism during the second Temple period, particularly at the turn of the Christian era, was a key marker for Jewish ethnic

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<sup>16</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 90.

<sup>17</sup> See chapter two, particularly 49-75 of this work.

identity.<sup>18</sup> In the time of Isaiah, the hope of Israel was to return from exile to the Land of Palestine, and to re-establish Jerusalem and its Temple.

But in the Gospel of Mark, as Riches states, the way of the Lord did not have as its climax the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple as expected, rather the way of the Lord culminated in the crucifixion of Jesus at the place of the skull, outside of Jerusalem. Then in a little while the disciples were told to go to Galilee and from there they were charged to go out and preach the Gospel to all nations. The channel for communication with the sacred is no longer the Jerusalem Temple, nor is God's meeting point in the sacred places in that particular Land of Palestine. Instead, God is present everywhere; the disciples go and preach the Gospel as Jesus promised them of his presence (Mt. 28:20).<sup>19</sup> Riches rightly states that the boundaries of the Land are diminished and become insignificant. This is not surprising because, just as in the contemporary dualistic cosmology, the presence of evil powers is universal, so too the universal presence of Jesus is to be experienced everywhere, within and outside of the Land. The Son of Man, the expected Messiah of the Jews, was rejected by the Jews and even driven out of the land of the Gadarenes, a Gentile community. Thus, Jesus, who will judge the whole world, abolished all attachments to home and country (Mt. 8:28-34).<sup>20</sup> In the narrative of the healing of a Canaanite woman's daughter, Luz interestingly comments that 'Jesus may have spent time in the area of Tyre, but in Jewish villages. Viewed biblically he would remain in the 'Holy Land'. However, the 'gentile' expression, 'the region of Tyre and Sidon', shows that Matthew was not interested in the idea of the 'biblical Holy Land'. Jesus temporarily

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<sup>18</sup>See this work 58-62.

<sup>19</sup> Riches, 2000, 235.



went to the region of Gentile cities Tyre and Sidon just as in 8:28-34 he went to the land of the Gadarenes, in spite of the Jewish mission charge in 10:5-6. In the next pericope he will already be back in Israel. Matthew seems to be less interested in the salvation historical-geographical problem of the Holy Land than in the persons<sup>21</sup>. Not only Jesus but also his disciples are told to abandon all local ties and attachments (Mt. 10:34-39). Interestingly, even though the disciples have to abandon their family and local ties they are promised that they will inherit the kingdom, not the Land.<sup>22</sup> Mt.8:11 might suggest Jerusalem, Matthew's holy city, to be the gathering place of nations from each corner of the world, but with this must be contrasted 27:53 in which the city and its temple is being split by the power of the new world which is formulated in the resurrection of Jesus. In this context of the new world, the gathering place is wherever Jesus is present with his disciples (18:20; cf. 1:23; 28:20).<sup>23</sup> For Judaism, the Land, especially the sacred places, were significantly important as the gathering place of God's people; but for Matthew such sacred places are no longer so significant, and the Land does not play a vital and important role because the universal presence of Jesus undermines the sense of sacred space in Judaism, which characteristically identifies God's dwelling place with the promised Land, and with specific sites within the Land.

In relation to the concept of attachment to the Land, it is interesting and relevant to look at the parable of the wheat and the darnel. Most Matthean specialists give their attention in this parable to the relationship between the church and the

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<sup>20</sup> Riches, 2000, 235-9.

<sup>21</sup> U. Luz, *Matthew: 8-20, A Commentary*, trans. James E. Crouch, 'Hermeneia-A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible,' (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 338-9.

<sup>22</sup> Riches, 2000, 239.

world, but Riches concentrates also the role of Satan in the parable. He critically examines the parable in the text from cosmic dualist and forensic eschatological viewpoints. One point of his conclusions which is particularly important and noteworthy here in relation to our thesis is that, 'the sons of the kingdom are no longer those who belong to Israel geographically and by descent and observance, they are those, anywhere in the world, who are 'sown' by the Son of man, who follow and obey him wherever he leads.'<sup>24</sup> It is true in fact because according to the parable the sons of the kingdom have no origin or root in Abrahamic biological ties but in the seed sown by the Son of Man, which is the preaching of the Good News. The field is not limited to the Land of Palestine, but it is extended to the whole wide world. So the significance of the Land is diminished in Matthew and the concept of the homeland (the Land of Palestine) in Judaism is extended to the entire world by the preaching of the Gospel (Mt.28:18-20). Upholding the importance of the Land in Judaism is no longer the central aim of the Matthean community; for them the eschatological new world is their central and eternal expectation. Therefore, attachment to the Land is not a key marker of Matthew's new group.

### 5.3.2 *Attachment to the Temple*

The 70 CE events of the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem brought in, inevitably, a new era in both religious and political terms. Since the Jews had lost their political power, they had no choice but to give direct tax to Rome in place of the former Temple tax (Mt.22:19-21). The specific and complex attachment to the

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<sup>23</sup> Riches, 2000, 237, n. 14 and also 239, n. 23.

Temple in both Palestinian Judaism and Diaspora Judaism before 70 CE has come to an end. One of the central Jewish ethnic identity markers, attachment to the Temple by paying tax, had been transferred to the *fiscus Iudaicus* tax directly paid to the Roman government. As Riches remarks it has been transformed into a powerful reminder of Jewish subjugation and humiliation.<sup>25</sup> The annual gathering of the Jews at Jerusalem was no longer possible under the Romans' authority.

One critical issue arises: if the Temple was already destroyed and the Temple tax was no longer paid, why then is Matthew still talking about Temple tax (Mt. 17:24-27)? Luz believes that it was out of faithfulness to the tradition.<sup>26</sup> Riches suggests one possibility: that Matthew linked the pericope with the paying of the Roman tax into the *fiscus Iudaicus*. I have given my suggestion in an earlier part of this thesis that even though Matthew's church is free to pay the Temple tax as the Temple was no longer the central place for Matthew's community, the Matthean Jesus told his disciples to pay the tax possibly for two reasons, (1) in order to avoid misunderstanding, and (2) lest their life should be offensive to others who pay the tax as indicated in the text (Mt.17:27a).<sup>27</sup> The Matthean Jesus' saying that one greater than the Temple is here (Mt. 12:6) affirms the insignificance of the Temple in Jerusalem; the Matthean group no longer gathered in the Temple but around Jesus, and this breaks down the attachment to the Temple for Matthew and his group.

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<sup>24</sup> Riches, 2000, 240-3, especially 243.

<sup>25</sup> Riches, 2000, 229.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Riches, 2000, 229, n. 1.

<sup>27</sup> See this thesis 183.

### 5.3.3 *Kinship and Blood Ties in Matthew's Gospel*

In Judaism blood ties and natural kinship are one of the hallmarks of the boundary between Jews and other ethnic groups.<sup>28</sup> But Matthew plays down blood ties and kinship and underlines his emphasis on fictive kinship by John's polemic against the Pharisees and Sadducees that God can raise from these stones children of Abraham (Mt. 3:9). This does not mean that the Jewishness of the Matthean community is abandoned. Their Jewishness is well established from the very beginning in the genealogy of Jesus which substantiates the Jewish identity of Jesus as a descendant of Abraham (Mt. 1:1-17). Riches suggests that the Matthean group members, at the very least as brothers and sisters of Jesus, are intimately tied to the Son of David and of Abraham.<sup>29</sup> It is true that they ( the members of the Matthean group) are intimately tied to the Son of David and of Abraham; however, the bridge that makes them brothers and sisters of Jesus is not biological descent or natural kinship but believing Jesus and doing the will of God (Mt. 12:50). Thus, from the beginning Matthew firmly established his Jewish Messiah as one who comes to fulfil the Law and the prophets, not to abolish them, and who is a teacher and interpreter of the Law (cf. Mt. 5- 7 chapters) and who fulfils the prophetic sayings.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, natural kinship ties do not hold Matthew's new group together.

### 5.3.4 *Baptism as a New Identity Marker*

The practice of baptism by the Matthean community is not much debated. The dispute among scholars in relation to baptism is whether Matthew's group baptised

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<sup>28</sup> See this thesis 49-58.

<sup>29</sup> Riches, 2000, 208.

by way of replacement of circumcision, or in addition to circumcision, or whether it was used for uncircumcised Gentile converts only? Riches believes that baptism and receiving the teachings of Jesus (Mt. 28:18-20) are the hallmarks of Matthew's group.<sup>31</sup>

When we come to comparative consideration of circumcision and baptism in the First Gospel, scholars are divided; some believe that circumcision was still practised,<sup>32</sup> while others consider the silence on circumcision as proof that it had been replaced by baptism for Gentile converts, but not for the Jews in the community. For scholars like Riches, baptism and the receiving of Jesus' teaching are more important than circumcision in Matthew's Gospel as the group identity marker of the Matthean community.<sup>33</sup>

Scholars who think that baptism replaced circumcision, construct their argument from Mt. 28:20. I would like to argue that if baptism was only for Gentile converts as a substitute for circumcision, why should it be necessary for Jesus to be baptized? That is to say that if baptism is meant only for Gentile converts, then Jesus would have not been baptized at all, because Jesus being a Jew, was circumcised (Lk. 2:21) which identifies him as a descendant of Abraham (Mt. 1:2, 17); yet the Matthean Jesus was still baptized by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:16-17). It suggests the strong emphasis of Matthew on baptism and gives the impression that baptism was required for Jews as well. The baptism of Jesus, who is not only a purely Jew but the Son of God and the expected Jewish Messiah for the evangelist and the members of the

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<sup>30</sup> Riches, 2000, 208.

<sup>31</sup> Riches, 2000, 208.

<sup>32</sup> Sim strongly argues that circumcision was still practised in Matthean community, see his work, 1998, 251-4, 278-9, 291 and elsewhere.

community, suggests the paramount importance of baptism for all the Jews (male and female) in the Matthean community.

What about Gentile converts? Were they baptized in order to join the Matthean community? It is not a crucial dispute in Matthean scholarship because the final statement of the Gospel clearly speaks of baptizing disciples in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit in all nations (Mt. 28:19). Despite a dispute<sup>34</sup> there is a consensus that the Matthean community's mission includes the Gentile world in the post-resurrection period as seen in 28:18-20. In this 'to all the nations' mission charge, inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles, the formula for entry into the Matthean community is clearly indicated: (1) make disciples, (2) *baptize* them, (3) teach them all the commandments. It is clear enough that baptism was a requirement for Gentiles too to enter into the Matthean community. The fact that their Master Jesus, who was a Jew by birth and surely circumcised, was baptized and that he further reinforces baptism at the mission charge (Mt. 28:18-20), gives the impression that the Matthean community practised baptism for both Jews and Gentiles, male and female, (this would be in addition to circumcision for male Jews); thus baptism probably became one of the central key markers of their group identity.

In conclusion, baptism was very likely a requirement for everyone, Jew and Gentile, male and female, to join the Matthean community. It was not a replacement of circumcision for the male Jews but rather a ritual practice in addition to circumcision for the male Jews as exemplified by the Matthean Jesus. However, it is

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<sup>33</sup> Riches, 2000, 208.

<sup>34</sup> Sim argues that the mission charge in Mt. 28:18-20 excludes Gentiles and in his opinion the Matthean community's mission was as a matter of practice only to the Jews, see his work Sim 1998, 236-256.

an ambiguous issue whether baptism was replacing circumcision for Gentile converts or whether it was additional to circumcision as equally with the male Jews. It is an open question for further discussion, although the author of this thesis is in favour of the hypothesis that Gentile converts were also probably required to undergo circumcision in equality with the Jews.

### ***5.3.5 Separation at Table Fellowship as an Identity Marker***

Table fellowship at meals is certainly related to ethnic issues for the Matthean community. The treatment of table fellowship at meals in the Gospel is clearly intended to establish group boundaries between Jews and Gentiles (the outside world of the Matthean community). There is no critical question on purity laws among the Jews themselves, but it becomes a crucial issue when they eat together with the Gentiles. It raises at least two questions: (1) Was it possible for Christian Jews to eat together with their Gentile Christians at home, and outside as well? (2) Were all foods clean for members of the Matthean community?

Mark's Jesus declared that all foods are clean (Mk. 7:19) which we assume to mean that Mark breaks down the ethnic group boundary at meals for his Gentile church.<sup>35</sup> But Matthew avoided the Marcan version of 7:19 'all foods clean' and by implication it would suggest that he retains the Jewish tradition on purity at meals and draws the line between his community and the outside Gentile world (cf. Mt. 15:1-20). This means that Mark interprets liberally the food laws and declares all foods

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<sup>35</sup> For a discussion see this thesis, 142-8.

are clean, whereas Matthew maintains his Jewish tradition as distinct from the Gentile way of life.<sup>36</sup> The following story of a Syro-Phoenician (a Canaanite Gentile) woman makes the point of the food laws clearer. Both Mark and Matthew have the pericope that Jesus travelled to the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon where, according to Mark, he enters a Gentile house. He was fervently asked by a Syro-Phoenician to heal her demon-possessed daughter. After some conversation Jesus granted her request and healed her daughter. In this context of the Syro-Phoenician, Riches reads that the contrast between children and dogs replaces the language of clean and unclean of the earlier chapter (the clean and unclean food); it also suggests that the woman in this pericope is compared to the unclean and the outsider.<sup>37</sup> The woman understands the class distinction in the hierarchical household. The dogs are part of the group but of lower status. Riches' reading is quite interesting. The rejoinder of the woman contains insight; particularly the phrase that 'dogs get something' means that within hierarchies there is a common bond as well as differentiation of status.<sup>38</sup>

Sim believes that, by implication, Jesus must have eaten in Gentile households, hence the pronouncement of the Marcan Jesus that all foods are clean.<sup>39</sup> By contrast, P. Esler, points out as followed by Sim and Riches, that Matthew sets the scene outside the Gentile house with the intention of maintaining Jewish custom and purity laws by avoiding table fellowship with Gentiles.<sup>40</sup> It is interesting to see that

<sup>36</sup> This issue has been argued in this thesis cited above 142-8.

<sup>37</sup> Riches explains with further notes that dogs are generally seen as scavengers in Jewish context (Ps. 22:16; 59:6, 14) for they eat unclean carrion (Exo. 22:31; cf. 1Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:19, 23, 24, also 22:38; 2 Kings 9:10, 36; Ps. 68:23; Jer. 15:3; Rev. 22:15; see Riches, 2000, 244, n. 29; see also Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27, (New York: Doubleday), 2000, 463-4.

<sup>38</sup> Riches, 2000, 245 and n. 30.

<sup>39</sup> Sim, 1996, 191.

<sup>40</sup> Esler, 1987, 89-93; Sim, 1996, 191-2; Riches, 2000, 217.



the Matthean text (Mt. 15:21-8) is different from the Marcan text in Mk. 7:24-30, as Luz states that it is part of a redactional dialogue. As such one should not regard it as a traditional saying of Jesus but as a Matthean creation based on the traditional saying in 10:5-6. Luz further comments that the healing from a distance corresponds to the situation of the Gentiles.<sup>41</sup> Firstly, Matthew is more Jewish than Mark in the mission discourse, 'I was sent only to the house of Israel,' (Mt. 15:24) where Mark has a more relaxed version, 'Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs,' (Mk. 7:27). Mark's phrase 'Let the children first be fed' which is omitted in Matthew, suggests that the house of Israel be fed first, then the Gentiles after the Jews. Matthew, however, omits the implied feeding of the Gentiles in this particular context, his target here is only Israel. Matthew's particularism in this mission discourse, that is, his concern for Israel only, must be offensive to non-Jews. This reflects the community life of Matthew that he Judaized by applying and upholding the Jewish laws of purity and by implication set boundary between Jews and Gentiles. The motivation of Matthew for mission to the Jews only also reflects his policy of forming a purely Jewish community. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the powerful advocacy of the woman for her daughter's plight and her faith breaks the traditional boundary between Jews and Gentiles and gives the impression that Gentiles were admitted into the fellowship of the Matthean community.

Secondly, as Esler, Sim, and Riches have pointed out, the difference between Mark and Matthew is that Mark places the scene inside a Gentile house, 'And he entered a house,' (Mk. 7:24b) whereas Matthew avoids that Marcan clause, instead he

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<sup>41</sup> Luz, 2001, 336-7.

paraphrased and set the scene outside, 'a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried,' (Mt. 15:22a) This difference in placing the scene outside and inside seems to suggest that Matthew does not want to present Jesus as having table fellowship with the Gentiles in a Gentile house, while Mark seems to reaffirm the preceding passage 'Jesus declared all foods clean' (Mk. 7:19b). Matthew retains the Jewish tradition of separation at meals with Gentiles and table fellowship in Gentile house. It implies that Matthew does not envisage a new rule for his community but upholds the Jewish laws on purity food, not all of them but what he considers to be the true Jewish tradition and rejects what he considers to be Pharisaic man made laws.

Thirdly, Matthew presents Jesus as having reservations about the Canaanite (Gentile) woman as seen in Matthew's text. Jesus appears to have ignored her at the first request, 'But he did not answer her a word,' (Mt. 15:23a). In contrast, the Marcan Jesus answered the woman at the very outset of her request although the request was not granted immediately (Mk.7:27). This seems to reflect Matthew's unfriendly attitude towards Gentiles and contrarily Mark's liberal inclusiveness of Gentiles.

Finally, in this scene Mark describes one instance of the messianic secret when he says that Jesus entered a Gentile house and did not wish any one to know it; yet he could not be hidden (Mk.7:24b). Mark presents Jesus deliberately entering a Gentile house but trying to hide his action; yet even though the messianic secret is not successful in this narrative, Jesus could not be hidden (Mk. 7:24b). Matthew does not have this Marcan phrase 'he could not be hid' (Mk. 7:24b), which seems to suggest

that Matthew does not intend to publicise the messianic role to the Gentile world in that region at least.

Now we can draw some lines applicable to the community life and principles of Matthew for his group from an ethnic viewpoint. (1) Matthew retains distinctions between clean and unclean in relation to table fellowship which obviously means setting ethnic boundaries between Jews and Gentiles. (2) Matthew presents Jesus being separated from Gentiles by locating the scene outside of a Gentile house so that he could uphold the Jewish food laws. (3) Granting the request of the Canaanite woman gives the probability of accepting Gentiles into the community. (4) We do not see any indication that might suggest that Matthew makes one set of rules for Jews and another for Gentile converts; nor for giving his community a freedom to choose which regulations to apply in different circumstances. Since, then, Matthew does not make another set of regulations for his Gentile converts, he must give the impression that the minority of Gentiles in his congregation are expected to observe the Jewish laws, including the food laws. The rules and regulations that Matthew inherited from his Jewish tradition seemed to be valid for everyone in the congregation in all situations. Matthew does not seem to make any looser rules or additional rules, or alternative rules for his Gentile converts but all regulations apply to everyone equally, both Jews and Gentiles in his community.

### ***5.3.6 Circumcision as an identity marker***

We have dealt with the issue of circumcision in the Gospel of Matthew and its relationship to ethnicity in which we argued that the Matthean community practised circumcision as an important requirement for entry into the community so as a law-

observant community.<sup>42</sup> We have also discussed the incident at Antioch and gave our argument that the incident was caused by the issue of circumcision and table-fellowship in which Paul failed to convince the circumcision party that eventually ended the relationship between Paul and the church at Antioch and the church became a law-observant community.<sup>43</sup> We need not to repeat the arguments but fair enough, referring to the arguments cited above, to assume that circumcision was one of the identity markers for the Matthean community.

#### **5.4 Ethnic boundary and racial distance in Jesus' healing ministry in Matthew**

The Gospel of Matthew contains a good deal of Jesus' healing ministry. If we investigate that healing ministry from an ethnic point of view, Matthew seems to draw an ethnic boundary between Jews and Gentiles by presenting the scenes of Jesus' healing ministry in two layers. The scenes of healing the Jews are located in the house, or around Jesus at a reachable distance, and Jesus personally encounters all the Jewish people whom he heals. But he (Jesus) cures Gentile sick people from a distance according to Matthew's Gospel, as we shall now see.

In Mt. 8:1-4, (cf. Mk. 1:40-44) a leper came to Jesus and asked him to heal his leprosy. In Jewish law leprosy was one of the seriously unclean things and anyone found with leprosy is kept outside of the community as an untouchable person. But Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the leper, and healed his leprosy (Mt. 8:3). What immediately follows (Mt. 8:5-13) is a scene of healing a Gentile, the centurion's servant. In this pericope the centurion shows a deep respect for Jesus by

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<sup>42</sup> See this work, 224-6.

<sup>43</sup> See this work, 118-134.

illustrating the relationship between his own role as a centurion with soldiers under him, and Jesus (vv. 8-9, cf. Lk. 7:6-8). Matthew had Jesus intending to go to the house of the centurion (7:6a), Luke presented Jesus going to the house of the centurion (Lk. 7:6a), but none of them had Jesus entering into the house, nor do we see Jesus touching the sick in this pericope of healing the centurion's servant, a Gentile. Strikingly, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the leper (an unclean person) in Mt. 8:1-4 but he healed the sick Gentile from a distance, not going into the house. Is it that the Gentiles are more unclean and therefore less likely to be touched than the leper? It is difficult to provide a solid answer to this question. Luz states that Matthew is concerned to demonstrate that Jesus is faithful to the Law as a Jew and that therefore he cannot enter a Gentile house (cf. Acts. 10:28).<sup>44</sup> However, in relation to our interest, it is possible that Matthew draws a boundary line between the Jewish ethnic group and others (Gentiles) by locating the scene outside of the house.

The intention of Matthew is seen more clearly in the narrative of the healing of a Canaanite woman's daughter (Mt. 15:21-8). As we have discussed,<sup>45</sup> Mark located the scene inside the house of a Gentile but Matthew relocated it outside of the house, (Mt. 15:21-28, cf. Mk. 7:24-30). In Mark, by putting the scene in a Gentile house, the Marcan preceding phrase 'Jesus declared all foods clean' is put into practice; Jesus is presented eating food with the Gentile household. But in Matthew's redaction, by relocating the scene outside of the house, Matthew is able to retain the Jewish tradition and upholds the food laws. In both Matthew and Mark, Jesus did not go to the Gentile woman's house to heal her daughter, instead he healed the girl

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<sup>44</sup> Luz, 2001, 10.

<sup>45</sup> See this thesis, 236-40.

from a distance. In these two healings, the servant of the centurion and the daughter of a Canaanite woman, the sick people are Gentiles and they are the only two Gentile people healed in the Gospel of Matthew.

Interestingly there are two healings of Gentiles which were performed from a distant place, while all other healings (of the Jews) were performed by the outstretched hand of Jesus or at least by physical touch from Jesus. This closeness is apparent in the following stories. In Mt. 4:23-24 the sick people were brought to Jesus and he healed them all. In Mt. 8:14-15 Jesus entered into Peter's house (a Jewish house) and cured Peter's mother-in-law. In Mt. 8:16, it is said that all who were brought to Jesus were healed; in 8:28-32 two demoniacs met Jesus and he cast them out; in 9:1-8 Jesus healed a paralytic who was brought to him; in 9:20-22 a woman suffering from a haemorrhage was healed; and so on many other sick people were healed 9:27-31, 9:32-33, 12:15, 12:22, 14:14, 14:34-36, 15:29-31, 17:14-18, 19:2, 21:14, even a dead person was raised up in 9:18-19, 23-25. All these were presumably Jews, because it all took place in the region of the Jews; and all these healing miracles were performed by the physical touch of Jesus, not one of them healed from a distance. The Matthean Jesus' healings of two Gentiles were done from a distant location without physical involvement of Jesus which suggests the likelihood of Matthew's ethnic boundary between his community and the outside world. Luz rightly states that the healing from a distance corresponds to the situation of the Gentiles.<sup>46</sup> If this hypothesis is correct, it may be right to say that Matthew draws ethnic boundary lines around his group by retaining Jewish customs and practices for clean and unclean, Jews and Gentiles. This is to say that Matthew does

not impose new rules for his community but upholds uncompromising Jewish traditional customary laws and regulations for his entire congregation (both Jews and Gentile minority), regardless of their ethnic origin and cultural background.

## **5.5 Matthew's Community Rules from an Ethnic Perspective**

### **5.5.1 *Preliminary thoughts on the Community Life and its Formation***

John P. Meier is right in saying that the Gospel of Matthew is a complex reality, consisting of elements from Judaism, from the early church, and Hellenistic Christianity, all woven together into a rich but tension-filled unity.<sup>47</sup> Kilpatrick states that Judaism gives the central position to the Law that Matthew's Gospel gives to Jesus' teaching and his life as the model.<sup>48</sup> But the Gospel of Matthew, by giving Jesus as the centre of the life of the individual and the community, refers to Jesus as the fulfiller of the Law and the prophets rather than simply pointing to him. Riches raises three interesting questions in regard to Matthew's community life and rules: (1) Did Matthew envisage one set of rules for circumcised Jews and another for uncircumcised converts? (2) Was he giving his community freedom to choose which regulations to apply in different situations? (3) Or was he insisting on full observance of old (Jewish traditional rules) and new?<sup>49</sup> I would like to add another question to be considered, that is, did Matthew set certain rules which differed from Judaism in his own community or he was reforming Judaism?

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<sup>46</sup> Luz, 2001, 337.

<sup>47</sup> Meier, 1976, 10.

<sup>48</sup> See in Meier, 1976, 10.

<sup>49</sup> Riches, 2000, 208-209.

It appears to us that Matthew did not intend to found a new religion, instead he is re-Judaising Mark; at the same time he stresses the distance between his group and the outside world of the Pharisees and the Gentile world on the other hand. Riches states, 'Matthew's emphasis on Jesus' teaching and discipleship as a form of instruction constructs the different worlds in terms of knowledge and ignorance. But even though Jesus teaches the crowds openly, there is still, as Matthew 13 makes clear, a radical (unbridgeable) gap between Matthew's community and the world outside: the crowds cannot hear or understand because their hearts have been hardened.'<sup>50</sup> Mark is more at ease in his contact with the outside world by declaring that those who are not against his community are for them, (Mk. 9:40), but Matthew reverses this principle in the Beelzebul controversy (Mt.12:30). Matthew sharply draws the lines between his group and outsiders including the Jews outside of his community (Mt. 7:21-23) and he defines his members as people who do the will of God, the Father in heaven.<sup>51</sup>

In terms of group tendency, Saldarini makes a good observation and states that the Matthean community is a community with a strong sense of group cohesion, laying much stress on fictive kinship to describe its members.<sup>52</sup> It is true that Matthew portrays his group as brothers and sisters. The Matthean language describing the relationship among the members is indeed that of 'brothers and sisters' as a new fictive kinship group (Mt. 12:50; cf. 5:22, 23, 24; 7:4; 18:15; 18:21, 35).

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<sup>50</sup> Riches, 2000, 212.

<sup>51</sup> See also Riches, 2000, 212-3.

<sup>52</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 90-4; also Riches, 2000, 205.



In contrast to life in the synagogues, Matthew does not portray scribes, rabbis, wise men, teachers of the Law in a high rank although he acknowledges them (Mt. 10:41; 23:34; 13:52).<sup>53</sup> In 10:41 he refers to prophets and righteous persons – probably the Christians who are on the way to perfection (cf. 5:20; 48).<sup>54</sup> Unlike the Pharisees the Matthean Jesus does not allow his disciples (members of Matthew's church) to be called 'rabbi' (Mt. 23:7-8). In Matthew's context among the disciples it is only Judas the betrayer of Jesus who called him 'rabbi'. The central attitude for the Matthean group towards one another in the community is humility demonstrated in serving one another with a servanthood attitude as exemplified by their master Jesus (Mt. 20:25-8; cf. 10:43). In fact both Gospels of Mark and Matthew contain a common goal of making disciples of the kind that they formed from among all nations, (Mt.28:16-20; cf. Mk. 16:14-18). They both emphasise subordination of natural kinship and family ties. When there is a conflict between natural ties and fictive ties, the natural ties must take the second place (Mk. 10:28-31; Mt.12:46-50). R. Guelich observes that Mark has very little interest in distinguishing between Jews and Gentiles, and Riches comments that Mark's lack of interest in the distinction between Jews and non-Jews would suggest that this lack is the product of his own distancing from such ethnic markers.<sup>55</sup> As Riches states, 'Mark is attempting to identify the defining characteristics of his group. And these do not lie in ties of kinship, of family relationships, or descent from Abraham, but in doing the will of

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<sup>53</sup> See also Stanton, 1992, 130.

<sup>54</sup> Luz, 2001, 121.

<sup>55</sup> R. Guelich, 'Anti-Semitism and/or Anti-Judaism in Mark?' in Craig A. Evans and Donald A. Hagner, eds. *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 98-9; Riches, 2000, 103.

God as taught by Jesus in the process of their Christian life<sup>56</sup>. Fictive ties replace natural ties *as definitive of group membership*.<sup>57</sup>

In the congregations of Matthew and Mark during the time of writing of the Gospels, the question of ethnicity within the communities themselves seems to be scarcely known. Their main sociological and religious political concern in their time was the struggle to legitimate their group and the conflicts between their group and the parent body. Riches is right in saying that in the new community (the Matthean community) there is actually no explicit reference to such ethnic distinctions.

The Matthean community seems to have its own rules that contain (a) principles or steps for membership into the community, (b) rules to be observed by its members, and (c) rights for exclusion from the community (Mt. 16:19; 18:17). We have discussed steps for membership into the community ( chapter 5. 2 ) and we shall examine the rules set to be observed by the community members which are related to ethnicity. We do not deal with rules for exclusion for assumption that it does not relate to ethnicity but obviously concern with a member's life and behaviour (Mt. 18:17-18) while the other two kinds of rules, i.e. requirements for membership and rules to be observed, seem to be related to ethnicity either implicitly or explicitly.

### ***5.5.2 Rules to be observed***

#### **(a) Law Observance**

In our previous sections we had discussed the position of the Law in the Gospel of Matthew and reached our conclusion that Matthew upholds the Law and interprets

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<sup>56</sup> In this context 'doing the will of God' is the theme of their life in the church which should not be confused with repentance and baptism which are the steps for entry into the community.

it in the light of Jesus' teaching, presenting Jesus as a teacher of the Law, and fulfiller of the Law and the prophets.<sup>58</sup> Matthew affirms the permanent validity of the Mosaic Law (5:19-20) and expects his members to observe it more excellently than the scribes and the Pharisees (5:20, cf. 6:1-18). But as we have stated above, Matthew's interpretation of the Law is always in the light of Jesus' teaching. For instance, in Mt. 5:21 Matthew cites a Mosaic Law concerning killing (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17; 16:18), 'You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgement.' Then Matthew interprets it in the light of Jesus' teaching as a new principle by putting it into the mouth of Jesus, 'But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgement; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, "You fool!" shall be liable to the hell of fire, (Mt. 5:22). In this text (5:21-22), Davies and Allison explain that according to Moses, those who commit murder will suffer punishment. According to the Matthean Jesus even those who direct anger towards a brother and speak insulting words should suffer punishment. For the followers of Jesus it is insufficient just to refrain from the act of murder. They must exceed the Mosaic Law by searching out the source of anger and root out all anger.<sup>59</sup> In the light of Jesus' teaching the Matthean community rule here in this context is not simply refraining from murdering but rooting out all causes of anger and living peacefully with everyone in the community. That is to say, the Mosaic Law is not sufficient for Matthew to keep his community harmonious; he endorses Jesus'

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<sup>57</sup> Riches, 2000, 77.

<sup>58</sup> See this thesis 138-50.

<sup>59</sup> Davies and Allison, 1988, 509.

teaching on the Law for his community rule as completion of the requirements of the Law.

In the verse which immediately follows, the Matthean Jesus summons his hearers for reconciliation: 'So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift,' (Mt. 5:23-4). This implies firstly, that reconciliation is more important than offering a gift to God, secondly, reconciliation must precede giving our gift to God at the altar. Thirdly, it implies also that disciples must not only root out their own anger (cf. v. 22) in simplicity and innocence, they are also taught to do all that they can to lessen the anger of a brother (cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 4.18.1)<sup>60</sup>. Fourthly, the offended brother must be appeased first by the process of reconciliation which Matthew offers as a way for forgiveness and peace among his members. Thus reinforces his emphasis on brotherhood within the congregation. Fifthly, it also implies that the spiritual and moral state, by reconciliation, is more important than sacrificial expiation. Furthermore, he teaches his followers to make friends even with their accusers (5:25). By implication, we can see that Matthew constitutes his community rules on the basis of Mosaic Law; but viewing it in the light of Jesus' teaching, he goes deeper and emphasises moral and spiritual welfare. For instance, where the Mosaic Law says 'you shall not kill,' the Matthean Jesus precedes it by saying that even getting angry with own brother is a sin liable to judgement, and insulting a man by saying 'You fool' makes one liable to the hell of fire. As we have stated, Matthew is not satisfied with the punishment instead he intends to remove all

the causes of discord from its roots. By contrast to the Mosaic Law that offers a penalty for any sin, the Matthean Jesus teaches people to be reconciled and to make peace with one another. This is a community life-principle that Matthew sets for his congregation; while upholding Torah he offers a way out from punishment by reconciling one another within the community and making peace with the outside world which accuses them.

Another example of Matthew's community rule in relation to Law is seen in 5:43, 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy,"' (cf. Lev. 19:18; Lk. 6:27-28, 32-36). The Matthean Jesus teaches, '...Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven;' (5:44-45). The Law is quoted but Jesus' teaching overthrows the attitude towards the enemy and asserts on the contrary that man should love his enemies and pray for those who persecute him (Mt. 5:44). In this text enemies are defined as those who persecute Christians which means that one is to love not only personal opponents but God's opponents, the opponents of God's people. Matthew uses 'love' not in the future indicative (cf. 5:43), but in the present which is to be defined that (1) one must pray for enemies with love and in sincerity, (2) do good to them (5:45), (3) and salute them (5:47b): all must be in action not emotion.<sup>61</sup> It reflects the life style that Matthew intended and how he interpreted the teachings of Jesus on the Law for his congregation. This also suggests that the Matthean concept of loving our enemies by praying for them and doing good to them

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<sup>60</sup> Davies and Allison, 1988, 517.

<sup>61</sup> Davies and Allison, 1988, 551.

is becoming sons of God (cf.5:9) which in turn suggests that people who do not do so as the Matthean Jesus teaches will mean outsiders and thereby a boundary is drawn.

There may be many other pointers in relation to the Law in the life of the Matthean community, the Matthean community probably observed all the laws in detail (cf. Mt. 5:18; 23:20); but even these two examples may be sufficient to show our interest in this aspect of Matthew's thinking and the conviction that Matthew upholds the Law as the basic principle (which he takes from his Jewish background) but interprets it in the light of Jesus' teaching as a new rule for his church. That is to say, Matthew upholds the Jewish laws, for instance, in keeping a distance from Gentiles outside of his community and keeping the Sabbath; but the teaching principle of Jesus which Matthew takes for his community is different on some issues. In dealing with enemies of the community the Law says to hate those who persecute us but the Matthean Jesus teaches people to forgive and even to be reconciled with our enemies as we have discussed above. This suggests that Matthew envisages some rules and principles of his own for his community but all of the rules has its roots in Jewish culture and custom which he refined in the light of Jesus' teaching.

As far as the interpretation and application of the Law is concerned Matthew does not make any special rule, any concession, or employ looser rules for his Gentile converts. That is to say, Matthew expects his Gentile minority in the congregation to observe the Law and the rules he sets for his majority Jewish Christians. By implication, it is clear that Matthew ignores the cultural background of the Gentile minority in his community leadership. Everyone, regardless of their ethnic origins, is

expected to observe all the rules to the same degree in his community.<sup>62</sup> There is no sign or indication that Matthew envisages another set of rules for his Gentile converts.

(b) A Rule of Separation at Table Fellowship

Separation at table fellowship has been discussed in this thesis and I have argued that Matthew prohibits his community from table fellowship with Gentiles.<sup>63</sup> In our discussion on this issue (cited here above) the omission of 'Jesus declared all foods clean' by Matthew from his Marcan source was reaffirmed by the following scene of healing a Canaanite woman's daughter in which Mark presented the scene in a Gentile house but Matthew relocated it outside of the house, reinforcing the Matthean rule of separation from the Gentiles. We also argued that Matthew rejects the Pharisaic laws but firmly upholds the Jewish traditional law of purity at meals by separating his community from eating with the lawless Gentiles. Matthew attacks the Pharisees and the scribes at points he considers to be Pharisaic developments of the law but sensitively and seriously endorses all that he believes to be the Mosaic Law and Jewish tradition.<sup>64</sup> This suggests that the Matthean community rules include a rule of purity at table fellowship which he inherited from his Jewish tradition. This too implies Matthew's uncompromising stance, i.e. he adopts his Jewish scriptural tradition (not of Pharisaic tradition) and endorsed it as a rule for his community without considering his Gentile minority. It may be right to say that this rule of separation from Gentiles (outside of the Matthean community) would have prevented

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<sup>62</sup> There are scholars who argue that Gentiles in the Matthean community might have been given a lesser or relaxed law, but texts, like Mt.5:19, do not seem to intend any sort of relaxation, instead, it rather explicitly indicates that if anyone relaxes the law he or she will be least in the kingdom.

<sup>63</sup> See this thesis 142-8.

the Gentile converts (within Matthew's group) from having social contact with their own fellow Gentiles outside. This would have linked the Gentile converts closely to their fellow Jewish Christians in the community, but surely it must have isolated them from their own natural kinsfolk. They would have probably lost their social identity and adopted a new identity. Their former life and cultural and customary practices were seemingly regarded as impure pagan culture. Whether the Gentile converts found this comfortable or painful, did not seem to be questioned or considered. This set of Matthean community rules seems to be very much one-way, those rules being adopted from Judaism and turned towards Christian Judaism without any room for the comfort of Gentile minority.

(c) Sabbath Observance:

Sanders states that in the post-biblical period both inside and outside of Palestine Sabbath observance was one of the most important features of standard Jewish practice and it was a major topic of discussion in Jewish literature.<sup>65</sup> The clearest expression of Sabbath observance in the Gospel of Matthew is found in the apocalyptic discourse (24:20). Mark composed his apocalyptic discourse and urged his congregation that they should pray that their flight may not happen in winter (Mk. 13:18). The concern for Sabbath observance is completely discarded in the Marcan version but Matthew deliberately inserted Sabbath and redacted his version, 'Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a *Sabbath*' (24:20). This suggests that the author of the Matthean Gospel and his congregation were Sabbath observers. Since

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<sup>64</sup> See my argument in this thesis 142-8.

<sup>65</sup> Sanders, 1990a, 6; see also Whittaker, 1984, 63-73.



Sabbath is listed in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20: 8), it is clear that Matthew drew his community rule of Sabbath observance from his Jewish background, the Hebrew culture.

However, the detailed rules governing Sabbath observance in Matthew seem to be different from those of the Pharisees and the scribes of his time. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus encounters criticism from the Pharisees on the matter of Sabbath observance (12:1-8; 9-14). We have argued that Matthew interprets the Sabbath law in the light of Jesus' teaching which gives priority to human needs and merciful acts rather than the traditional strict law of Sabbath observance. Sanders correctly states that the synoptic Jesus' behaviour on the Sabbath falls within a range of permitted behaviour and thus he defended his actions and the actions of the disciples. There is no indication that his justification was rejected nor charged by the local magistrate in regard to Sabbath observance.<sup>66</sup> This does not mean that Matthew abandons Sabbath observance; rather it reinforces the fact that he interprets the Law in the light of Jesus' teaching. Further, it suggests (1) that the Matthean community observes the Sabbath in accordance with the teaching of Jesus as their Master, (2) and also implies that Jesus is superior to the Sabbath as indicated clearly in Mt. 12:8 that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath.

It is conceivable that Matthew imposed Sabbath observance as a rule for his community with his interpretation of Jesus' teaching.<sup>67</sup> In contrast to Matthew, rather than observing the Sabbath Mark has only the pericopes which describe Jesus working on the Sabbath: teaching on the Sabbath (Mk.1:21), his disciples plucking

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<sup>66</sup> See Sanders, 1990a, 23.

heads of grain (Mk.2:23-24), and the forceful teaching that ‘the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath;’ (Mk.2:27.-28). The picture of Jesus as Lord even of the Sabbath (Mk. 2:27-8): healing on the Sabbath (Mk.3:2-6), and again teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath (Mk. 6:2) does not betray any sign or indication in the Marcan Gospel that the church observed the Sabbath. Rather, Jesus’ actions re-enforce the fact that he performed merciful deeds on the Sabbath, which proves his lordship over the Sabbath. But Mark gives the impression that it was Jews who observed the Sabbath (Mk. 15:42; 16:1) but not his church. Mark records all other apocalyptic discourse as does Matthew, but the clearest indication of Sabbath observance in Matthew, which is the word *Sabbath*, is completely missing in Mark (cf. Mt. 24:20). This gives the impression that the Marcan community did not keep the Sabbath but the Matthean community observed it in accordance with Jesus’ teaching. In a sense the Matthean community is distinct from some of the other early church communities like the Marcan and the Pauline churches.

It is important and interesting to view Sabbath observance from an ethnic point of view. Despite some arguments we assume that Mark wrote his Gospel for a Gentile majority congregation whereas Matthew wrote his for a Jewish majority congregation. In the light of this, Mark seems to diminish the Sabbath law for his congregation, but Matthew, on the other hand, upheld the Sabbath law. In addition to this, Paul who was committed to a Gentile mission and wrote his letter to the Roman church (a Gentile church) did not seem to impose a rule for Sabbath observance at all (Rom. 14:5-6). These facts give the impression that Paul and Mark did not impose a rule of Sabbath observance for their Gentile congregations but

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<sup>67</sup> See this thesis, 148-50.

Matthew followed his Jewish tradition of Sabbath observance. In another words, both Mark and Matthew were concerned solely for the majorities in their communities and neglected the minority's background and ethnic origin. Matthew set this rule of Sabbath observance because he himself was a Jew and the majority of his congregation were Jews. Mark discarded Sabbath because his congregation was largely composed of Gentiles. From an ethnic point of view the evangelists were concerned for the majority only and seemed to be uninterested in the minority's interests, ethnic origin, and cultural background.

(d) A Rule of Separation in their Social Life

There is some evidence which seems to suggest that Matthew made rules of separation in his community's social life. As we have argued earlier, in the healing ministry of Jesus, as distinct from his Marcan source, Matthew presented Jesus' healings of Gentiles as being performed from a distant location, so that Jesus never entered the house of a Gentile or physically encountered the sick Gentiles. By contrast, all the healings of Jews were done by physical touch and many of them took place in their own home or in a Jewish house or a Jewish gathering place<sup>68</sup>. This gives the impression that the Matthean community rules would have required separation from the Gentile world. In another words, this is a reflection of one of the ethnic boundaries between Jews and Gentiles throughout the history of the Jews that draws a clear line between clean and unclean and applies this to racial differences. It indicates that Matthew endorsed some Jewish customary laws for his community. The words of the Matthean Jesus also clearly expressed the view that Gentiles were

outcasts and comparable with dogs (15:26), which suggests that Matthew would have not allowed his members to be mixed with the unclean.

If Matthew, who intends to show the great importance of mercy over the Sabbath law in the disputes over Sabbath observance (12:1-13), draws a racial boundary line in healing the sick (15:28; 8:13),<sup>69</sup> it is further suggestive that he forbade his members from intermarriage and other social linkage with the Gentiles outside of their community. By enforcing these rules between the Matthean group and the Gentiles outside of their community, Matthew, it could be said, was transforming Judaism in the light of Jesus' teaching; he was not creating a new set of rules but renewing some Jewish traditional laws and ritual practices. He accommodated the Gentile converts physically in his community but did not have room to accommodate their culture.

From an optimistic point of view, this leadership style of the evangelists (Matthew and Mark) is to be appreciated for accommodating the minority into their communities, but the minority was probably expected to identify themselves with the majority and possibly to downplay their own ethnic identity, their culture, custom, etc. into that of the majority group. It raises some questions: (1) Does the minority feel at ease and comfortable? (2) Are the minority treated well and as equals with the majority in the community? (3) Is it practically the best principle to accommodate totally different ethnic origins and cultures under a single set of rules and regulations? (3) Would it be a wise suggestion to make different rules for different people but in a single community? Or (4) is it preferable to form different congregations according

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<sup>68</sup> See this thesis 241-4.

to peoples's background or origin for solidarity and more harmonious life which might bear more fruit?

It seems that from Matthew's theological point of view, all the rules are set out for the purpose of unity towards solidarity (Mt. 18:19), and the interpretation of unity and harmony of the community is the key to the invitation to feel God's presence, 'For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (18:20). And the presence of God is the supreme power and the prime mover for making disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:20) which seems to be their goal above all things. However, the critiques and the aftermath, which shall be dealt in the following chapter, may testify what answer or answers might be best and most suitable for the past, present, and future.

## **5.6 Conclusion:**

In conclusion we would like to gather up the whole chapter. First of all, it is seen that many of the Jewish ethnic identity markers in Diaspora Judaism in the first century are changed in Matthew's Gospel. Firstly, attachment to the geographical Promised Land is diminished. Instead of focusing on the Land of Palestine, the Matthean community seems to focus on to the whole world in its preaching of the Gospel (28:18-20). Instead of longing to return to the Palestinian homeland the Matthean church seems to look forward to the eschatological age as the final fulfilment of the coming of God's Kingdom. Secondly, attachment to the Temple as an ethnic identity marker in Diaspora Judaism at the time of the Gospel was also no

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<sup>69</sup> This references are for the two Gentile healings that took place from distance, for references and discussion of healing the Jews see this thesis already cited above, 241-4.

longer significant in Matthew's Gospel.<sup>70</sup> The members of the church no longer gathered in the Temple of Jerusalem, they sat at the feet of Jesus and his teaching as a new people of God and confession of Jesus as the Messiah became one identity marker for the believers.

One important Jewish ethnic marker in the Diaspora Judaism, that is, kinship and blood ties, was also played down by Matthew and it was no longer the requirement for membership of the community. Although Abrahamic descent still occurs in the Gospel narratives, it is no longer the boundary or a necessary condition for admission to the Matthean community, as we see that some Gentile members joined the group (Mt. 8:5-13; cf. 3:9).

The issue of circumcision is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks in Matthean study since there is no explicit indication in the Gospel to make a decisive conclusion either, whether the Matthean community as a whole practised it, or whether the Jewish members practised ritual circumcision and the Gentiles were exempted. However, it is most likely that every Jewish male in the community would have been circumcised by the time Matthew became a pillar in the Antiochene church, so that their opponents had no grounds to attack them on the issue of circumcision and the evangelist did not need to give any reason to justify his Jewish members in the congregation. The question: whether the Gentile converts were circumcised or exempted is still very ambiguous. If they (Gentile converts) were exempted from the ritual requirement of circumcision it is very likely they were put on a lower status in the community; of course that might lead to a possibility that the opponents might have attacked them for accepting the uncircumcised into a Jewish

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<sup>70</sup> Attachment to the Temple has been argued in this work, see 231-3.

dominant community. Baptism seems to be the clearest new identity marker for the community most probably practised by everyone both male and female, Jew and Gentile, regardless of their ethnic background.

While Matthew is forming a new community as a sectarian group, the group seems to observe the Mosaic Law contained in the Hebrew Scriptures. We see the Matthean group observing the Sabbath in light of Jesus' teaching, and the laws on purity and food at table fellowship, and some of the laws concerning clean and unclean in terms of ethnic origins that implies racial marginalization. In relation to ethnic boundary markers Matthew explicitly and implicitly makes clear lines between his group and the world outside which are clearly seen in texts like 20:19; cf. 10:5, 4:15, 10:18, 20:25. Even in the healing ministry of the Matthean Jesus there was apparently a distinction between Jews and Gentiles in that Jesus did not heal the two Gentiles by touch, but he healed all the Jewish sick either by stretching his hand or the sick people touched him or were confronted by him in one way or another.

Unlike the Judaism of the time, it seems that proselytizing to Judaism was not strictly a requirement for joining the community; but converts were joined by repentance affirmed by baptism, (probably circumcision too) and a continuous faithfulness to the teachings of Jesus, a steadfast love for God, and a total commitment to do God's will.

Matthew did not envisage an entirely new set of rules; his community rules are inherited from Judaism but interpreted in the life and teaching of Jesus which are distinct from the interpretation of the Pharisees. Matthew did not seem to make a special rule for his Gentile converts nor an alternative to be applied in different circumstances, instead his rules are set for every one in the congregation and valid for

all circumstances. Although there is a softening of Jewish ethnicity in identifying their group, by playing down the Jewish ethnic identity markers such as blood-ties, attachment to the Land, and to the Temple, the Matthean community rules do not seem to have concern for the comfort of the Gentile minority. Rather, there seems to be different status or levels in the Matthean community life, that is to say, it seems that the Gentile minority members were placed in a lower position and the Jews in a higher status in the hierarchies. The consequence of that racial or ethnic distinction will be the focus of the next chapter.

Moreover, it appears to us that the Gentile converts joined the Matthean community by abandoning their original ethnic identity and assimilating Jewish culture and community. In other words, the Gentiles were judaized by applying the Jewish laws and culture to their community life in the church of Matthew. All the members in Matthew's church were seen as one people: *the Jews*, and no more Gentile in the eyes of the author of the Gospel. But the question is: did the Gentiles fully enjoy sacrificing their ethnic identity and adopting the Jewish ethnic identity?

When we compare the position of proselytes in the Qumran Community with the Matthean attitude towards Gentiles in Mt. 15:21-28 and in Mt. 18:17, it seems that the proselytes in Qumran Community and Gentile converts in Matthean community were placed in a lower status. If our conclusion is correct, it is then right to say that there is racial discrimination between Jews by birth and Gentiles in the community life of Matthew's church. One can imagine and raise a question: how painful a feeling it would be for the Gentile converts who abandoned their culture, their relatives and blood-ties, and embraced another culture and ethnic group, but where they were ill-treated and perhaps unable to raise their voice for being a tiny minority



group? In this regard, we may make a further question as to whether judaizing other ethnic origins is the true teaching of Jesus or simply the intention of the author of the Gospel?

## Chapter Six

### **CRITIQUES TO THE MATTHEAN LEADERSHIP AND HIS COMMUNITY RULES IN RELATION TO ETHNIC ISSUES**

#### ***6.1 Introduction: A Reading of the Gospel Text from Hermeneutical Point of View***

Different people may read the text from different perspectives and apply to their contemporary context; and readers may learn from the text both positive biblical teachings and lessons from failures as well. The author of this thesis reads the Gospel text both from the angles of learning biblical teachings positively and also tries to find if there has been any failure in the leadership of the Matthean community in the early church so that we may not repeat the same failure but learn lessons from their leadership and management of the church. In this project the Gospel text has been viewed from historical-sociological perspectives and examined the leadership and the rules of the Matthean church how they maintained group cohesion between Jewish and Gentile ethnic origins as believers in the church of Matthew which produced the Gospel text. As the central theme of this research is to investigate any racial discrimination in the life of the Matthean church and apply to our contemporary needs, particularly to ethnic issues in Burma which is the most crucial issue since independence in 1948, I give my critiques of the Matthean leadership and its community rules from the perspectives of ethnic discrimination, cultural imperialism, and ecclesiological viewpoint in order that we may learn from the failures of the early church and do better to heal our wounded world by applying the results of our

research. The following sections discuss the failures of leadership in the Matthean church; and the next chapter, the closing chapter for the entire project, draws applications to ethnic issues in Burma with an earnest appeal to reconstruct Christian missions and constitutional structure of the state from a minority's perspective.

## **6.2 A Critique from an Ethnic Perspective: Racial discrimination**

The question of racial discrimination and ethnic conflict within the Matthean community is a neglected feature in Matthean studies. Most scholars who deal with the Life-Setting of the Matthean community pay much attention to the relationship between the parent body (especially with formative Judaism) and the Matthean community but very few, if any, have done anything to make a query of this particular issue whether Matthean Jews treated their Gentile converts equally in their community life? We face great difficulty with this question since there is no explicit indication about marginalizing within the group of Matthew in the Gospel text.

If we assume that Matthew came from a purely Jewish background and that his community was largely Jewish, the Jewish background of Diaspora Judaism might lead us to suspect there could be different status experienced by Jews and Gentiles in the community. Philo says of Egyptian (Gentile) converts to Judaism in Egypt that they were not fully accepted until the third generation (*Virt.* 102-8).<sup>1</sup> The Qumran Community, as a contemporary Jewish sect which claimed itself as the true Israel by faithful observance of the Law, did not admit the proselytes at once to their community. The literature of the Qumran Community states that it took years to admit the proselytes to full membership (*IQS* 6.13-23); even after admitting them,

they placed those proselyte Gentile converts in their community at the bottom rank of the hierarchy (*CD* 14.4-6).<sup>2</sup> If the contemporary Jewish sect, the Qumran Community, took years to admit the proselytes and placed them on a lower status even after admitting them to the Community, it is possible to imagine that the Matthean Jewish community also might practise a similar way of admitting Gentiles and placing them in a different level. The following may give as indication of how the Gentiles were probably viewed by Matthew and his group.

The pericope of the Canaanite woman (Mt.15:21-28) gives some good evidence that seems to indicate the different social status of Jews and Gentiles in the eyes of the evangelist and the community. The descriptive record of the woman's ethnic origin as a Canaanite woman gives a clear picture that the evangelist was quite conscious of ethnic origins; and the initial refusal of her request 'It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs' clearly indicates distinction between Israel as children of God and Gentiles as comparable to dogs.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the refusal of Jesus to answer her request, the disciples of Jesus expressed their negligence of Gentiles by suggesting to Jesus that the woman should be sent away (15:23b). Strikingly Mark does not have this phrase, the suggestion of the disciples to send the woman away, 'And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying after us,"' (cf. Mk. 7:24-30). If Luz is correct, the source in this text is Mk. 7:24-30 and there is no other source, nor are

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. McKnight, 1991, 92-93.

<sup>2</sup> See also Sim, 1998, 254.

<sup>3</sup> See my argument in this work 241-4.

there secondary sources.<sup>4</sup> Luz adds that, especially in vv. 22-25 and 28, the text has been completely rewritten by Matthew. Although women had a lower status in Jewish society in the first century they were allowed to be around Jesus but this Gentile woman was to be sent away from the scene in Matthew's Gospel, which Mark does not have at all. By implication, Matthew, the author of the First Gospel, did not welcome Gentiles (especially Gentile women) until and unless they were converted and Judaized. But Mark, having been assumed to have written his Gospel for a Gentile majority congregation, did not have any indication that Gentiles were excluded in this pericope of the Marcan Gospel.

The woman's kneeling signifies her submissiveness as does her confession of Jesus as Lord (15:22b). It could be either because women were marginalized that her request was rejected at the first stage, or that her Gentile background subsequently led to her request not being granted. The latter is more probable as it is supported and reinforced by the words of the Matthean Jesus: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," (15:24). The Matthean Jesus even shuts his mouth at her initial approach, 'But he did not answer her a word' (15:23a). Either on the basis of her gender as a woman or her ethnic origin as a Canaanite woman (Gentile), or both she was treated as a social outcast, although it may have initially stemmed from her existence outside of the Matthean community.<sup>5</sup> It may be true that there is an element in the story of Jewish male being dismissive of woman, nevertheless there is strong Jewish anti-Gentile feeling, these two run alongside in the story. It is quite likely that even after admitting her into the community there seems to be a distinction

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<sup>4</sup> Luz takes it from Tino Lovison, 'La pericopa della Cananea Mt 15.21-28,' *RivB* 19 (1971) 273-305. The English translation is taken from Luz, 2001, 336.

within the community too that the Gentile converts were in lower status in the community. It is interesting to compare with Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist theology, particularly her work for 'A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins' in which she argues that although women played very important roles in the early Christian movement and achieved significant success in the history of the church, most of their achievements were not recorded in the New Testament for the fact that all the writers of the New Testament were males. She, therefore, argues that the history of Christian origins should be reconstructed and re-written by both male and female in order that all achievements of male and female will be included.<sup>6</sup> It is still true with Matthew that as he was a Jew all his community rules were drawn from Jewish tradition and Gentile converts did not get comfortable room in the community. Just as the New Testament has been criticised because of its failure to record the works of women in the early church life, so too the Gospel of Matthew also fails to accommodate Gentile converts comfortably.

In admitting the Gentiles into the Matthean community the above pericope of the Canaanite woman shows a picture that Gentiles were considered only in second place, as the earnest request of the Canaanite woman was granted only after her repeated petitions; and obviously the Jews were given priority. In Mt. 18:17, the position of Gentiles is compared to that of the unrepentant sinner, 'If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.' Luz argues that for its members the

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<sup>5</sup> See this thesis, 241-4.

<sup>6</sup> See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, (London: SCM Press, Second impression, 1999), her entire thesis is on the theme of reconstructing Christian origins.

term ‘Gentiles and tax collectors’ refer to people with whom they did not associate.<sup>7</sup> He further states that ‘to treat someone as a tax collector and Gentile does not mean final condemnation, but from the perspective of Jewish Christians who are faithful to the Torah it does mean that one has nothing more to do with him.’<sup>8</sup> Sim also sees and states that, ‘in order to preserve their social and ethnic identity, the Jews erected boundaries between themselves and their Gentile neighbours’.<sup>9</sup> Since we assume that the Matthean community is largely Jewish and in terms of practice the community is thoroughly Jewish, it is presumable that the Matthean community would have had a clear boundary between themselves and the Gentiles outside of their community. This would have been very offensive to the former Gentiles as the Matthean community seemed to consider the Gentiles outside unclean and lower class of people especially when it came to the term that the members of Matthew’s community were expected to separate themselves from their former Gentile fellows at table-fellowship; and when they abandoned their ethnic identity by judaising themselves and joining the Jewish Matthean community. The Gentiles outside of the Matthean community would have viewed the Matthean group distinctive, perhaps disloyal to their social ethnic identity and hostile. It also shows the negative attitude of the Matthean community towards Gentiles outside the group and gives the impression that Gentile converts in Matthew’s group would have been judaized in order to maintain their Jewish purity of life. Since Gentiles were considered entirely outcast and a clear boundary line is drawn here between Matthew’s group and the Gentiles outside, how then did the Gentile converts cross that boundary between Gentiles outside and the

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<sup>7</sup> Luz, 2001, 449.

<sup>8</sup> Luz, 2001, 452.

Matthean community and how had they been treated once they had come into the Matthean community?

In the process of Gentile admission into Matthew's community, Sim argues that any Gentiles in the Matthean community would have been accepted on the basis of their conversion to Judaism in the process.<sup>10</sup> In fact there is no exception. In Matthew 5:17-19 all the laws must be observed in full; there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles in terms of obligation to Torah; the whole congregation of Matthew is to observe all the laws faithfully as taught by Jesus.<sup>11</sup> Saldarini also has the same thought that Gentiles in Matthew's group might have joined without compromising Jewish ritual practice and observance of the Law.<sup>12</sup> Abel also reads the same text (Mt. 5:17-18) and believes that Torah was still supreme in the Matthean community, which lowered the Gentile converts to second class individuals (cf. Mt. 6:7, 7:6).<sup>13</sup> It is conceivable that when the text depicts the Gentiles praying it is likely to mean the Gentile converts because the Gentiles outside of the church might not pray as much as the believers; and it is conceivable that the evangelist makes his observation on the basis of the praying of the Gentile converts in his community who joined the church recently as new converts from pagan culture. In this case, whether the praying Gentiles were inside or outside of the Matthean church,

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<sup>9</sup> Sim, 1998, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Sim, 1998, 7.

<sup>11</sup> So correctly Sim, 1996a, 186-7.

<sup>12</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 160. Of course this is not without dispute, for instance, Alan F. Segal argues that Paul might have influenced his model of law-free Gospel which did not require Jewish practices for Gentiles but accepted them as righteous when they believed and followed Jesus, see Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 204-5. We have argued in this thesis that Paul might have been influential at the early stage of the Antiochene church probably until the Antioch incident; but by the time of the Gospel's composition the church at Antioch was turned to the side of law-observant Christian movement.

<sup>13</sup> Abel, *NTS*, 17 (1970-71), 145.



their prayer is illustrated as unacceptable to God. This gives the impression that Gentiles (possibly in the Matthean community) were regarded as hypocrites, lower class in the religious sphere.

As we have argued, the fact that there was a clear boundary line between the members of Matthew's church and the Gentiles outside of their community suggests that the Gentiles who joined the Matthean community would have abandoned their original ethnic identity and cut off their social relationship with their blood-tie kinsmen or natural kinsmen outside the community. It is very likely that the Gentiles in the Matthean community were judaized and Matthew then seems to consider as Jews those Gentiles who had joined the church.<sup>14</sup> Although the Gentile converts would have sacrificed their ethnic origin and culture for the sake of their faith, and probably judaized in the Matthean community, there is no indication in the Gospel that they were treated equally with their fellow Jewish members. The probability is rather, as we have stated above, that they (Gentile converts) were placed at the lower status in the hierarchy.

With regard to ethnic boundaries, it is clear that the law-observant party<sup>15</sup> of the early Christians kept a boundary between Jews and Gentiles by keeping the Jewish laws. Sim seems to be right in saying that Gentiles could become followers of Jesus only by becoming proselytes in the law-observant Christian community<sup>16</sup>. It was only in the law-free Christian community that the privilege of Israel had come to an

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<sup>14</sup> Also Sim, 1996a, 190. The judaizing of Gentiles is the reason why Sim calls the Matthean community 'Christian-Jews' and the movement 'Christian Judaism', see Sim, 1998, 25.

<sup>15</sup> R. E. Brown argues that there were four different types of Christianity in the early church life, see Brown's introduction in R. E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 1-9; however, basically two types of Christianity (law -observant and law-free) in the early church is still the consensus.

<sup>16</sup> Sim, 1998, 19.

end which implies the eradication of the boundary between Jewish and Gentile ethnic groups;<sup>17</sup> but not in the Matthean law-observant church.

Luz even believes and states that the community of Matthew resolved to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles and this decision most likely became controversial in the community. Then Matthew acted as the advocate for this crucial issue and tried to defend the Gentile mission.<sup>18</sup> If Luz is correct, it would then suggest that a significant member of Matthean community members had a strong animus against Gentiles, that is to say, such members were reluctant even to see Gentiles converting and joining them in the community, and that these were opposed by those who wished to include Gentiles. Saldarini expresses his doubt that Gentiles were present in Matthew's group and offers a possibility that the final scene of the Gospel (Mt. 28:18-20) is Matthew's call to his Jewish followers to include Gentiles within their community.<sup>19</sup> The arguments support the fact that Gentiles were considered as outcast people and there seems to be reluctance to invite and include more Gentiles into the community. If our conclusion here is correct, we would have to assume that any Gentile who joined the community was unlikely to receive the same status and treatment as the Jewish fellow members in the Matthean church.

### **6.3 A Critique from Cultural Imperialism Viewpoint: Imperialism by**

#### **Assimilation through Acculturation and Accommodation**

Barclay gives a helpful definition of assimilation and acculturation as follows, 'Assimilation may be taken to refer to *social integration* (becoming similar to one's

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<sup>17</sup> Sim, 1998, 20.

<sup>18</sup> Luz, 1990, 84.

neighbours): it concerns social contacts, social interaction and social practices. By contrast 'acculturation' is here used to refer to the *linguistic, educational and ideological* aspects of a given cultural matrix.<sup>20</sup> Although he defines these two phenomena as contrasting with each other, he is also at the same time aware of the similarities and the positive stands of those terms. For our purpose in this particular discussion the two terms '*assimilation*' and '*acculturation*' will be used rather in a positive way, inter-linking to each other. Sociologists and anthropologists may use the terms in different ways but for this current argument we will use those terms to mean that when one is accommodated into another's cultural society the minority's culture is often acculturated into the majority's culture in such a way that the former is assimilated to the later. That is to say, for instance, when a Gentile male was converted and joined the Matthean Christian-Jewish community, according to our argument, he had to adopt the Jewish religious culture and was required to undergo circumcision by which the Gentile new convert is acculturated into the majority's culture (i.e. Jewish culture) and his former customary practice was assimilated to that of Jewish culture.

Before we give our critical assessment on the life and rules of the Matthean community from cultural imperialism point of view, it is fruitful to see the statement of S. Sharot, a sociologist:

while substantial or even total acculturation of a subordinate ethnic group need not necessarily involve substantial assimilation, substantial assimilation will always involve substantial acculturation. An ethnic group may retain its cohesiveness and social boundaries despite its adoption of cultural patterns of

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<sup>19</sup> Saldarini, 1994, 157, for fuller discussion see 68-83.

<sup>20</sup> Barclay, 1996, 92.

the majority or core group, but an ethnic culture is almost bound to disappear if the ethnic population absorbed by the majority.<sup>21</sup>

We see from Sharot's explanation in the above statement that even although substantial acculturation of a subordinate ethnic group may not necessarily involve substantial assimilation, nonetheless substantial assimilation will always involve substantial acculturation. It is indicated also that even though a subordinate ethnic group may well try to retain its social cultural boundaries once it adopts the majority ethnic group's culture, the subordinate or minority ethnic group's culture is almost bound to disappear.

Reconstructing Barclay's definition of acculturation and assimilation, and viewing majority and minority cultural relationship from the light of Sharot's sociological note above in relation to possible cultural conflicts in the Matthean community, we can make some observations as follows. (1) It has been argued that the Gentiles were a tiny minority in Matthew's community which suggests further that they would have been subordinate to the dominant majority Jewish people. (2) It is clear that the religious culture of the Gentiles was viewed as pagan practice and condemned in almost every aspect. (3) It is very likely that the Gentile minority group would have adopted the Jewish culture and so have been assimilated to the Jewish culture and their ethnic culture would have been replaced by the Jewish culture. (4) Since there is no indication that Matthew had envisaged any set of rules specifically for his Gentile converts, but rather that his community rules were concerned for the majority cultural group only, they (Gentiles) had to bear the same yoke with the Jews without raising any question whether the rules were comfortable

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<sup>21</sup> S. Sharot, *Judaism: A Sociology*, (New York: Holmes & Meirer, 1976), 3.

or intolerable for them.<sup>(5)</sup> By acculturating into the majority Jewish culture, either the Gentile culture would have disappeared or intolerable conflict would have occurred in the Matthean community. We will examine this in due course in the following section: 'the aftermath'.

We must not neglect however, to appreciate Matthew's concern and welcoming attitude for Gentiles into the banquet (8:11-12), and accommodating them in their community (15:21-28), his vision for Gentile mission (28:18-20), and significantly his concern for the Gentiles by playing down some of the most important features of Jewish ethnic identity markers: kinship and blood ties, attachment to the Land, and attachment to the Temple probably softening for the comfort of his Gentile converts. If we view from the perspective of the first century Judaism, it is also possible that Matthew considered that to become a Jew by conversion to his Jewish Christian community is the only way to become a member of the eschatological people of God. But the problems with the Matthean Life-Setting are: (1) even though Matthew played down the significance of kinship in group identity markers he began his Gospel with the genealogy of the Jewish people in which Gentiles have almost no place and they would not feel at home in the community, (2) there is no room in the community rules for people of other ethnic origins, different cultures, distinctive race and colours, and (3) there is no space for them to bring their natural identity into the community; all is intended to be judaized which leads us to the question: what does the evangelist mean in the phrase 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations'? Does he mean to judaize all the nations or to proclaim the salvation message of Jesus and disciple the nations in their own context? By saying that the Matthean community rules do not contain any room for

accommodating Gentile culture, we do not mean that the Gentiles should have been allowed to continue their pagan culture and practise idol worship, and lawless life. Our argument is that there should have been a different layer of rules for Gentile converts, which would have allowed new converts to enter the church without circumcision, perhaps not observing Jewish dietary laws and laws relating to the Sabbath observance, etc. In other words, our argument is that Gentiles should have been allowed to be Gentile Christians, i.e. not necessarily judaising everyone by imposing Jewish culture and custom upon all who believe in Jesus. Clearly such accommodation of Gentile customary practice would have required careful regulation and would not have been easy; it might easily have led to splits within the community. Equally the absence of any discussion of how to accommodate Jewish and Gentile practice within the Matthean ecclesia, gives a strong indication that Gentiles were expected to embrace Jewish practice. At the same time, the Matthean concept of law observance i.e. the Jewish tradition and life, is seen in Mt. 5:19-20 that any one who relaxes the commandments and teaches men so shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. This clearly indicates that constituting a set of more relaxed rules for Gentile converts will mean making them least in the kingdom of heaven. Moreover, by implication, we can see the negative attitude of the author of the First Gospel towards Gentiles; if he conceives that relaxing the commandments will cause men to be least in the kingdom, it is presumable that he would have considered Gentile culture and customary practice as lower layer or unacceptable in his church.

## Conclusion

Matthew may not have the intention of imperialism for the obvious reason that his community's struggles were to legitimate their group as the true Israel and to disciple all the nations. But if we view him from a cultural imperialist perspective Matthew (perhaps unconsciously and unintentionally) fell into cultural imperialism. In the past imperialism was defined as a military exercise but in modern times it has been defined as 'an ideology of expansion that takes diverse forms and methods at different times, seeking to impose its languages, its trade, its religions, its democracy, its images, its economic systems, and its political rule on foreign nations and lands.'<sup>22</sup> Dube further states that 'imperialist ideology of expansion uses the promotion of its own cultural values to devalue, replace and suppress diversity.'<sup>23</sup> As we have stated above, Matthew might not have considered himself as an imperialist, but if we view him from a cultural imperialism perspective it is hard to avoid saying he is not imperialist. In fact the evangelist used his own Jewish cultural values to devalue the Gentile culture, and certainly replaced the Gentile culture by his Jewish culture that suppressed them all as far as the Gospel text is concerned. The author of the First Gospel can be viewed as a faithful leader to his own Jewish culture, but at the same time he is a cultural imperialist to the Gentiles and the Gentile culture in his community because as far as our knowledge is concerned there is no indication that

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<sup>22</sup> Musa W. Dube, 'Reading for Decolonization (John 4: 1-42),' 37-8, in *SEMEIA* 75, *Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading*, Laura E. Donaldson ed., (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 37-60. For more detail and different definitions and methods of imperialism, see Rene Maunier, *The Sociology of Colonies: An Introduction to the Study of Colonies*, Vol. 1, (London: Routledge, 1949), 133-260; Robert Delavignette, *Christianity and Colonialism*, (New York: Hawthorn, 1964), 1-46; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 9-13; Louis Snyder, *The Imperialism Reader: Documents and Readings on Modern Expansionism*, (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1962), 40-44; Thiongo wa Ngungi, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, (London: James Curry, 1986), 1-3.

the Gentile converts were given any consideration in the community rules and regulations. Gentiles were accepted and accommodated to the Matthean community; they acculturated to the culture of the dominant Jewish members in the community and assimilated themselves along with their culture into the Jewish culture. If we speak from a liberation theological point of view the Matthean leadership can be viewed as colonizing the Gentiles by imposing the Jewish culture upon them in the community.

Worst of all, there seems to have been church conflict leading to the split of the Matthean church in Antioch, the most likely cause of which was an intolerant cultural conflict rooted in ethnic origins. The next section 'the aftermath' will focus on the church of Antioch after the Matthean leadership and will examine the root cause of church conflict and schism from theological and ecclesiological viewpoints in relation to ethnicity .

#### **6.4 The Aftermath: A Critique from an Ecclesiological Point of View in Relation to Ethnicity and the Role of Culture**

There is a consensus that Ignatius became a bishop at Antioch some time in the first decades of the second century CE i.e. after the Matthean leadership period. But the question disputed among scholars is: whether Ignatius was the successor of Matthew in the Christian Jewish community or the bishop of the Gentile church at Antioch independent of Matthew's Christian Jewish church. A further question is: if Ignatius was bishop of the Gentile church which differed from the Matthean church, how did this Gentile church begin to exist; was it separated from the

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<sup>23</sup> Dube, 1996, 52.



Matthean Christian Jewish community or was it founded by the law-free Gospel missionaries of the first century?

Our interest is not in the history of the church or churches at Antioch or the theological issues of the early church, but the importance of ethnic origins and the role played by culture in the life of these early Christian communities. This section will focus, therefore, on the role of culture and ethnic origins in relating to the early Christian movement at Antioch. Firstly, we will investigate the question of whether there were two local churches (a Gentile church and a Jewish Christian church) or the same single church in which Matthew was succeeded by Ignatius with a change of theological trend after Matthew. Then we will critically examine and argue that the root cause of conflict and schism (if there was any split from a community) was the cultural differences inherited from people's ethnic origins.

David Sim argues that Matthew's conservative sectarian Jewish community in Antioch was different from the law-free Gentile church which Ignatius served as the bishop. He places the former around the years 85-95 CE and the latter in the same city some one or two decades later. Sim claims that Ignatius was a self-confessed Paulinist and the bishop of the Gentile church at Antioch; and that the ethnic composition of Ignatius' church was certainly Gentile and opposed any attempts to Judaize its essential Gentile character.<sup>24</sup> In Sim's viewpoint the Gentile church of Ignatius at Antioch was born independently as a result of the resurgent Pauline mission to the Gentiles which took place after the destruction of the Jerusalem church.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Sim, 1998, 258-70, see for fuller argument 258-82.

<sup>25</sup> Sim, 1998, 270-2; also 165-213.

On the other hand, John P. Meier argues that there was only a single church in the early church movement at Antioch, which was the Matthean church, and Ignatius succeeded Matthew in the same church.<sup>26</sup> But Meier admittedly sees clear differences in theology between Matthew and Ignatius. Nevertheless, he argues that the reason for the theological differences between Matthew and Ignatius lies with Ignatius' attempt to moderate the theological controversy between the two extreme wings, the law-observant and the law-free Christian-Jews and their counterparts. He (Ignatius) consequently produced a theological synthesis of Pauline thought and Johannine theology combined with synoptic tradition especially Matthean theology.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Ignatius' theology is no longer a purely Matthean theology, which implies that although Ignatius succeeded to the office of Matthew at the Matthean church, yet he did not follow Matthew's theology directly. Meier believes that at one point Ignatius developed his theology from Matthew, namely for his apologetic answers to the gnostic or docetic opponents: though Matthew might lack the Johannine emphasis on pre-existence and the logos, his concentration on the earthly life of Jesus provided a healthy counterbalance.<sup>28</sup>

Meier concludes his hypothesis with the suggestion that despite differences in theology between Matthew and Ignatius, all the theological trends were the points of Ignatius' struggle for a middle position and the schism had not yet reached the point of separation into organized churches. One helpful thought for our interest is that Meier states that Ignatius had inherited the tensions which were present in the

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<sup>26</sup> Meier, 1983, 73-81.

<sup>27</sup> Meier, 1983, 77-8.

<sup>28</sup> Meier, 1983, 79.

Antiochene church in the days of Peter and Matthew in more developed form.<sup>29</sup> That is to say, the existence of tensions in the Antiochene church of Peter and Matthew is reaffirmed.

Sim argues against Meier's hypothesis, which holds the view that Ignatius succeeded Matthew at the same church. Sim argues and states that Ignatius' church and Matthew's church were different independent congregations. For Sim, it is doubtful that the law-observant church of Antioch would have soon abandoned its law-observant Petrine tradition and embraced the Pauline law-free Gospel. Sim argues that firstly, for Matthew, Peter stands as the pillar of the church, the rock, on which the church was founded (Mt. 16:18), but for Ignatius Peter is not the central figure, he referred to Peter only once (*Rom. 4:3*) and even then he is mentioned alongside Paul. Secondly, the Hebrew Scriptures and Jesus' fulfilment of them were significantly important to Matthew's church, but they were insignificant in the thought of Ignatius.<sup>30</sup> Sim reconstructs his argument that the large cosmopolitan city of Antioch must have been the target of the Pauline mission to the Gentiles which resulted in founding a Gentile church independent from the Matthean church; and this Gentile church, even though new in real terms, would have attracted many Gentiles and increased very rapidly. Sim states that the Gentile church would have considered itself to be the true heir and successor to the law-free mission which was once dominant at Antioch. In short, Sim's argument against Meier is that the church

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<sup>29</sup> Meier, 1983, 80-1.

<sup>30</sup> Sim argues also that Meier's argument might be reasonable only if one accepts that Matthew's church was a Gentile community and opened to the Gentile mission which Sim vigorously argued in his work and this thesis also agrees to it, Sim, 1998, 270-1, n. 31; see also this thesis 138-50, 247-52; also Trevett, 1992, 45.

of Ignatius and of Matthew did not share a common ancestry.<sup>31</sup> This is supported by the *Apostolic Constitutions* (7:46) which contains evidence that Peter ordained Euodius while Paul ordained Ignatius as their respective successors and means, by implication, that the Matthean church and the Gentile church at Antioch were independent from one another.<sup>32</sup> Seemingly the two churches at Antioch trace back their tradition to two origins - one to Paul and the other to Peter.<sup>33</sup>

Sim's arguments on the ground of Ignatius' attack on the Judaisers are noteworthy. (1) In Ignatius' *Letter to the Magnesians* 8:1; 9:1; 10:3, cf. also 11:1, it is clearly stated that Ignatius opposed Judaism and its practice. (2) Most scholars agree that Ignatius attacked docetism and a Judaising type of Christianity.<sup>34</sup> The Judaisers, whom the bishop attacked, hold to the validity of all the Mosaic Laws and they required other followers of Jesus to do the same.<sup>35</sup> This implies that the practice and the rules of the Judaisers which were vigorously attacked by the bishop and the community life of Matthew's church were in the same position, perhaps the later generation of Matthew's church. Ignatius expressed both his concern and his position that he was continuing the fight against law-observance within the early

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<sup>31</sup> Sim, 1998, 271.

<sup>32</sup> Technically it is hard to believe that Paul who was an apostle in or around the middle of the first century and believed to have died sometime in 58 or 59 CE would ordain Ignatius who became a bishop at the end of the first century. For the assumption of the time of Paul's death, see C. K. Barrett, 'Pauline Controversies in the Post-Pauline Period', *NTS* 20 (1974), 234. However, it is possible to see from a theological perspective that Paul's theology of law-free Gospel was successfully passed on to Ignatius as ordaining him in succession of the law-free Gospel.

<sup>33</sup> P. J. Donahue, 'Jewish Christianity in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch,' *VC* 32 (1978)92-3.

<sup>34</sup> V. Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 52-65; R. M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: Introduction, Vol. IV: Ignatius of Antioch*, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966), 54-6; Schoedel, W. R, 'Ignatius and the Archives', *HTR* 71 (1978), 97-106, 102; Donahue, 1978, 82-7; Trevett, 1992, 150-94, also see his summary in 194-9; cf. Sim, 1998, 274.

<sup>35</sup> Donahue, 1978, 88-90; also Trevett, 1992, 177.

Christian movement which Paul began some half a century earlier.<sup>36</sup> For him, it is not possible to confess Jesus and practise Judaism (*Mag. 10:3*).

Ignatius' *Letter to the Magnesians 4:1* mentions that these Judaisers were independent from the Gentile church; they had no proper meetings (*Mag. 4:1*) and there was division in their church (*Mag. 6:2*). Ignatius encouraged them to be one in faith and in action as the temple of God (*Mag. 7:1, 2*). The division was more clearly stated in his *Letter to the Philadelphians (Philad. 3:3; cf. 7:1)*. Sim believes that here the division is one between the Judaisers (the Jewish Christians) and the Gentile Christians.<sup>37</sup> In fact Ignatius enjoins the celebration of one Eucharist (*Philad. 4:1*) which is evidence that the division affected the common Eucharist and the groups celebrated separately. Because table fellowship in Judaism was the central focus of the religion, sharing a meal means fellowship before God.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, Donahue seems to be right in saying that this division in celebration of the Eucharist was caused by a continuation of Jewish practice of Judaism, i.e. the Jewish' observance of the Law, particularly the purity law at meals; i.e. the Christian Jews did not want to share table fellowship with the unclean Gentiles.<sup>39</sup> If this is the case, it means that the community was divided in terms of ethnic origins, i. e. Jews and Gentiles. And should this hypothesis prove correct, it is safe to assume that the Christian Jews expelled the unclean Gentile Christians from their community, or the Gentile Christians felt so uncomfortable with the Jewish tradition and practices that they separated themselves from the dominant Jewish Christian

<sup>36</sup> Sim, 1998, 277; also Trevett, 1992, 176-7.

<sup>37</sup> Sim, 1998, 280.

<sup>38</sup> Dunn, 1983, 12.

<sup>39</sup> Sim also agrees with Donahue's argument, see Donahue, 1978, 89-90; also Sim, 1998, 280.

community. Then the Christian Jews celebrated the Eucharist separately in a place where the unclean Gentiles were absent and the Gentile Christians did in their own way.<sup>40</sup> If that was the case, the root cause is certainly cultural distance in relation to ethnic origins between the two ethnic groups. We see Ignatius trying to reunite them (*Mag. 6:1-2; Philad. 7:1-2*); he also expressed his view that those who hold their own meetings accepted the authority of the bishop in words but not in actions; so he asserted that those who were with the bishop belonged to Jesus Christ (*Philad. 3:2*).<sup>41</sup>

It is essential to consider, as far as our evidence allows, who were the Judaisers that the bishop of Antioch encountered in Syria. Trevett argues that they were probably the members of the Matthean church.<sup>42</sup> Sim also argues that not long after the time of Ignatius the Matthean Christian Jewish community split into two separate groups; one group joined the Gentile church in Antioch, and the other group remained faithful to the Petrine Christian Jewish heritage and left Antioch for Beroea located some one hundred kilometres to the east of Antioch (cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 29.7.7-8; Jerome, *de Viris ill.* 3.1)) where they developed into the sect of the Nazarenes. This is supported by the fact that this Nazarene sect used only Matthew of all the Gospels; and also Epiphanius strongly attacked these Nazarenes for observing the Law but not being able to fulfil its requirements, which put them

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<sup>40</sup> In this case we do not mean that all the Gentiles have the same culture; they were certainly different from one race or ethnic group to another, this is to say that, from the viewpoint of the Jews all the Gentiles were different from them, and they (the Jews) were distinct from all of the Gentiles. To make the point more clear, here the root cause of division is not simply cultural difference but the distinctive cultural practice of the Jews, i.e. the cultural practice of boundary between clean and unclean.

<sup>41</sup> See also Sim, 1998, 281.

<sup>42</sup> Trevett, 1992, 180-3.

under a curse (*Panarion* 29. 8. 1-7).<sup>43</sup> This sect lasted for a number of centuries until it disappeared from history; probably they were overwhelmed by Islam as that religion invaded the region some time in the seventh century.<sup>44</sup> This is not an impossibility for the school of thought that holds the theory that the Matthean community was a largely Jewish majority with rules and practices inherited from Judaism, as we have argued in the previous chapters of this work. The Letters of Ignatius confirmed that he was a defender of the Pauline law-free Gospel.<sup>45</sup> However, one could wonder about the frequent use of Matthew's Gospel by the bishop in his writings which seems to point to a notion of the two church leaders succeeding one another, i.e. Ignatius succeeded Matthew. In this regard, Sim's argument is considerably convincing. He argues that the use of Matthew's Gospel by Ignatius is not because he was the successor of the Matthean church, but it is his strategy to explain to the later Matthean community the Matthean criticism of the scribes and Pharisees, which it is fitting to apply to them for their denial of the true Gospel, the law-free Gospel.<sup>46</sup> Sim argues that Ignatius uses the Matthean Gospel by way of comparison and contrast with the Pauline corpus; many of his references to the Gospel are designed to condemn rather than to affirm its Christian Jewish

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<sup>43</sup> See also Sim, 1998, 293; Jerome claimed that the Nazarenes were in favour of a Pauline Gospel but it is not persuasive. There are also some scholars who hold the view that the Nazarenes were Pauline supporters, but it is plausible, not certain. The evidence we cite here rather reinforces that the Nazarenes were an anti-Pauline community; and even if it were a Pauline community it could be that the later generation of this sect turned into the Pauline wing.

<sup>44</sup> Sim, 1998, 29, for fuller discussion see 289-297.

<sup>45</sup> Space does not permit for entry of the vast arguments made by different scholars in support of Ignatius' theological position as a Paulinist; it is a consensus that he was a successor of Paul in the law-free Gospel wing in the early church movement. The only dispute is: was he the bishop of the Christian-Jewish Church succeeding Matthew or bishop of an independent Gentile church (the Great Church) in Antioch.

<sup>46</sup> Sim, 1998, 284.

viewpoint.<sup>47</sup> The fact that Ignatius warned his readers in his letters not to follow the Judaisers implies that some of his members had turned to the law-observant group. This further reinforces the view that the law-free church and the law-observant community were established differently and independently with limited contact between the two groups.

### **6.5 Conclusion:**

If we consider our arguments and assess the evidence, (1) the contradiction in Ignatius' strong standpoint in a Pauline law-free Gospel and the use of Matthew's Gospel by Ignatius, (2) Ignatius' use of Matthew's Gospel to criticise the later Matthean community members, (3) and Ignatius' opposition to the latter Matthean Church members for not following the Matthean theology and to point favourably towards Paul's letters; it is conclusive that there were two churches in the Syrian city of Antioch in the early church movement. It is more likely that Ignatius was bishop of the Gentile church at Antioch than the successor of the Matthean Jewish church. Our evidence in the Letters of Ignatius strongly suggests that the bishop was a successor of a Pauline law-free mission who attacked any practice of Judaism and Judaising others, and defended any form of the law free-Gospel. Moreover, the Letters of Ignatius assuredly indicate that there was division among the Judaising Christian groups in Asia as cited above. Matthew's church also probably had undergone a conflict on the issue of table-fellowship referring to the Jewish purity codes in connection with clean and unclean groups of people, and they celebrated the Eucharist at different meetings after the Matthean leadership. This finally led to a

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<sup>47</sup> Sim, 1998, 286.



split. As Sim believes, if we assess all our evidence and facts it is most likely that the Matthean community ultimately splintered into two separate groups. One of these two groups was assimilated to the Gentile church in Antioch, probably after the death of Ignatius; and the other group left for Beroea, where they formed a sect known as the Nazarenes and maintained their law-observant Petrine heritage for some centuries until they totally disappeared in history.

Our critique of the early church movement in Antioch from an ecclesiological perspective in relation to ethnicity and the role of culture is that, the particular issues might be slightly different at different circumstance and times, but all the root cause of the division or split and conflicts of the Matthean church in Antioch is culture based on ethnic backgrounds. If one accepts the hypothesis of the emergence of two churches at Antioch as we have argued, and that the Gentile church was the outcome of the Pauline law-free Gospel mission which considered itself to be the heir of the true Gospel once dominant in the Antiochene church, this would testify to the paramount importance of culture upon which the so-called 'The Incident at Antioch' debate occurred during the apostolic period (Gal. 2:11-18).<sup>48</sup> Cultural intolerance between Jews and Gentiles caused conflict and tension at Antioch in the days of the Apostles, i.e. the incident at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-18; and the Jerusalem Apostolic Council in Acts 15) resulted in Paul losing the battle and Jewish culture becoming the dominant culture after the incident. The Gentiles had to choose whether to

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<sup>48</sup> Dunn discusses 'The Incident at Antioch' (Gal. 2:11-18) and convincingly argues that the debate among the early Christians at Antioch was table fellowship by the Jews with their Gentile Christian fellow members. This incident leads to a number of issues: it was on the issue of sharing table fellowship by the clean and unclean ethnic groups, it was also the matter of circumcised and uncircumcised, moreover, it was also with the intention of Judaising the Gentile believers, see Dunn, 1983, 3-57. However, all the causes could be summarised as cultural intolerance between Jews and Gentiles.

commit themselves to the rule of Jewish Law, or to separation and the formation of a new community in accordance with their Gentile cultural background.

Even more damaging was the split in the aftermath of Matthew's leadership, that broke out between Jews and Gentiles on the issue of law-observance set against the law-free Gospel movement, but here again the root cause is certainly culture inherited from an ethnic background. The *Letters of Ignatius* demonstrated the fact that there were divisions in the churches of Asia which led them to celebrate the Eucharist separately and also to hold meetings in different places. We cannot hide from ourselves the fact that the root cause of those divisions and splits was cultural intolerance of different ethnic origins between what was regarded as clean and unclean. It is therefore advisable, in the opinion of the author, that ethnic groups should be allowed to form their own community in the comfort of their culture and customs from the very beginning which seems to be preferable to a painful later separation. Either that or the majority group and group leaders should be very sensitive to the needs of any minority group in a mixed community, otherwise it may cause serious tensions, conflicts, and even bloodshed.

## Chapter Seven

### **APPLICATION FOR ETHNIC ISSUES IN BURMA**

#### **7.1 *Introduction:***

We critically studied the Life-Setting of the Matthean community in relation to ethnicity in chapters four and five of this thesis and examined the community rules and leadership of Matthew from an ethnic perspective in the preceding chapter, chapter six. We concluded our critique of the rules of Matthew and his style of leadership in the preceding chapter, that, his leadership and community rules were unbalanced; the community rules were set up only for the benefit and comfort of the Jewish majority ethnic group and contained no room for the comfort of the minority people who joined from a Gentile cultural background. Our comment is that, Matthew, despite having a great concern for the unity and harmonious life of his community, did not provide a space at all for his Gentile converts which, if our argument is correct, caused conflict within the Matthean group and led to a church split, or at least resulted in less embracing Gentiles in comparison to the Gospel's aim to evangelize and disciple all the nations (Mt.28:18-20). Therefore, our proposal for the leadership of the Christian Catholic Church and also for the management of ethnic affairs within a country-state or a nation in the secular world is that there must be room for each ethnic group, both majority and minority, even for the tiniest group existing in the spectrum of the administration. All minority rights and privileges should be given equal respect in the state and in the Christian Church administration. If that is not done, one could then expect conflicts and splits and should not be

surprised even at bloodshed in response to the unhealthy treatment which the minority group(s) receive from the dominant majority group(s).

In applying this research finding, first and foremost I would like to draw attention to the ethnic tension among the Zo<sup>1</sup> people which caused internal polemics within the Zomi Baptist Convention in Burma and finally resulted to a split of the convention (Zomi Baptist Convention) in April 1995 in which I was personally involved in the event as a responsible person. This application to the ethnic issues among the Zomi Christians, particularly among the Baptists, and its implication for Christian mission in Burma in wider terms in relation to ethnicity will be the focus of section one of this chapter. To make the causes and result of the ethnic tension understandable to the readers, it is essential to analyse the sociological structure of the Zo people from an ethnic point of view starting with a sketchy description of the people's historical background. This analysis of the Zo people's ethnic problems and the application of our critique of the Matthean leadership style to the ethnic issues in the Zomi Baptist Convention will generally apply to any of the major Christian administrative operations in Burma like the Myanmar Baptist Convention, the Myanmar Council of Churches and similar organizations as a whole which consist of different ethnic groups.

In section two of this chapter we will also draw on an application of the ethnic issues in the political affairs of Burma which caused the insurgency of ethnic groups against the central government as early as 1949 by the Karens. The Kachins

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<sup>1</sup> Zo is the name of a minority ethnic group in Burma to which the author belongs, and the immediate following glossary 'Zomi' is the language of the people which means 'the Zo people.' It is comparably like Scotland and Scottish, or England and English in those terms one stands for the land and one is for

soon followed, as did many other ethnic groups of Burma, as we described briefly in chapter one of this work. This ethnic insurgency has been taking place for over fifty years and many thousands of innocent people have died; and the national economy is in bankruptcy. All these factors caused the author of this thesis to cover this particular topic of ethnicity, for the recovery of the nation's long illness, a healthy treatment of the people of the nation, and for the drive to Christian mission.

## **7.2 An Analysis of Zo People's Sociological Structure from an Ethnic Perspective in Relation to the Split of the Zomi Baptist Convention and the Zomi Baptist Convention of Myanmar in 1995**

### **7.2.1. *Concise description of the historical background of the Zo people***

C.C. Lowis attempted an ethnographical survey of Burma and concluded that language is the best principle to classify the ethnic elements of Burma as he states here:

There are chronicles that give us a general conception of how the ethnical elements in Burma were disposed at the beginning of the historical period. So far as they go they merely show a distribution of tribes, much as it exists now - Burmans and Talaings in the plains, Chins and Karens in the hills - a distribution, moreover, that is such that proximity cannot be looked upon as any text of relationship. Here and there, too, there has been such fusion of different tribes that even custom and legend is shared in common. What geography and history tell us is too often fallacious. It is language alone that shows relatively few anomalies and gaps and exhibits a development along a classification of the peoples of Burma, we must look for our guide, not to chronicles, custom or folklore or propinquity on the map, but to speech, and only employ the other tests to check the criterion of language.<sup>2</sup>

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the name of the race. Similarly Zo is the generic name of the people which is argued soon after here in this section and Zomi means the Zo people.

According to this critical ethnographical survey all the languages spoken in Burma today belong to either one or the other two main language families, the Mon Khmer and the Tibeto-Chinese. It is uncertain, but probable that the Tibeto-Chinese groups were the first settlers in Burma.<sup>3</sup>

The Tibeto-Chinese languages are divided into two main groups, the Tibeto-Burman and the Siamese-Chinese. It is believed to be safe to take this linguistic division as the basic for ethnic classification and divide the main groups up into Mon-Khmer, Tibeto-Burmans, and Siamese-Chinese.<sup>4</sup> Within the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group, the Burmans, Chins and Kachins belong as one language family; while to the Siamese-Chinese, the Shans and the Karens belong as one language family.

In terms of migration waves the Tibeto-Burmans are divided into two branches as western Tibeto-Burman and eastern Tibeto-Burman waves. The former wave embraces the Chins and the Kachins, and the later includes the Burmans, the Marus, the Lashis of N'Makha, the Lisaws of Salween, the Lahus, and the Akhans of Mekong.<sup>5</sup> Of the western Tibeto-Burmans the Chins were probably the first arrivals in Burma.<sup>6</sup> The Chins seem most probably to have appeared through the valleys of Malikha and Chindwin rivers, down to the valleys of the Irrawaddy delta and on the sea-board of the bay of Bengal. From this they made their way towards the western uplands of Burma to the Chin state of today and into the plains of Burma as well. As

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<sup>2</sup> C.C.Lewis, *Ethnographical Survey of India-Burma, 1-4, ethnographical survey of India, Burma No.4. The Tribes of Burma*, (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1910), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, 1910, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, 1910, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis, 1910, 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis, 1910, 7.

time passed many of them made a further move to India and today the Chins are found in six states of North-East India: Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland, and Assam. Some of them crossed the Chin hills of Burma towards south-west and settled in Chittagong-Hill tract in Bangladesh. In another words, the Chins occupied, though they mixed with other ethnic groups of people, a large land between the Chindwin-Irrawaddy river in Burma and Brahmaputra river in India.<sup>7</sup> This would give a rough picture that the Chins are scattered in three countries, Burma, India, and Bangladesh, divided by international boundaries. But only the Chin state in Burma bears the name after them as Chin territorial identity in today's political administration.

### **7.2.2 *The Generic name for their Identity: Chin or Zo?***

In many early writings, the name 'Chin' is used to address this particular people, and that designation was used formally to identify the people and their inhabited land as the Chin special division and later as the Chin state. Some writers in the early days used various names such as Chin, or Kuki, or Lushai, or Kuki Chin, Lushai Chin etc. Whatever term is employed, it means the same people and is addressed to them. Very soon in the process of historical development, scholars of anthropology, sociology, and historians found out the fact that the name 'Chin' is given by outsiders, like Burmans, which is followed by the British writers in the beginning of the British annexation and colonialism, whereas the people call

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<sup>7</sup> Compare and see Lewis, 1910, 7.

themselves as Zo, with variations in pronunciation such as: Zo, Zou, Shou, Chou, Jo, etc.<sup>8</sup>

This confusion of terms for the generic name of the people is correctly stated by Mangkhosat Kipgen; he made his observation as follows:

Due to the clan and family feuds prevalent among them during the pre-British days, outside observers tended to regard the different clans as distinct peoples. Also as a big tribe occupying a large tract of hilly terrain touching the plains of both Burma and the then undivided India, they were known by the dominant peoples of both countries. While the Burmese called them 'Chin' or 'Khyan', the Bengalis and others in India called them 'Kuki', with a variety of spellings. The British, the common rulers of both nations, combined the two names into Kuki-Chin. They were thus known until the early 1870s when a third name for them, Lushai, was added to found confusion. From that time onwards the people who lived in the hills between the plains of Burma and India (now also Bangladesh) and southward from the Naga Hills to the Arakan. Zomi in Burma were variously called Chins, Kukis, and Lushais.<sup>9</sup>

The British administrators and military officers were responsible for making the people known to the outside world and at the same time they too were responsible for the imposition of the names Chin, Kuki, Lushais etc. Nevertheless, there were people among the British administrators and Christian missionaries who took pains to study the language, the culture, and the history of the people and they all concluded that their true ethnic identity is Zo.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> G.H. Luce, *Phrases of Pre-Pagan Burma: Languages and History*, Vol.2, (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), 86, n. 9, 87; see also V. Sangermano, *A Description of the Burmese Empire*, John Jardine ed., (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1884), 43.

<sup>9</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, 'The Growth of Christianity in Mizoram from 1894-1954 with Special Reference to the Role of Zo Culture,' (Unpublished D.Th Thesis), (United Theological College, Bangalore, 1992), 30-31, see in Khup Za Go, *A Critical Historical Study of Bible Translations Among the Zo People in North East India*, (Churachandpur, Manipur, (India): Chin Literature Board, 1996), 10-11; and literature cited there.

<sup>10</sup> Khup Za Go listed a number of people who studied the generic name of the people and found it out to be Zo, see Sahay, K. N., 'Tribal Self-Image' in S. C. Dube, ed. *Tribal Heritage of India Vol. I: Ethnicity, Identity, and Interaction*, (Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Kanpur: Vikas Publishing House, 1977), 9; Lewin, T. H., *A Fly on the Wheel or How I helped to Govern India*, (Aizawl, (India): Tribal Research Institute, 1977), 246; F. M. Rundall, *Manual of the Siyin Dialect spoken in the Northern*



The indigenous people also profoundly express their dissatisfaction with the misuse of the term 'Chin' to identify them. S.T. Hau Go, one of the first educated men and the organiser of the Zomi Baptist Convention wrote in his article entitled 'Some random thoughts about our people, our language, and our culture':

Whatever it meant or means, however it originated and why, the obvious fact is that the appellation 'Chin' is altogether foreign to us, it has been externally applied to us. We respond to it out of necessity but we never appropriate it and never accept it and never use it to refer to ourselves. It is not only foreign but also derogatory, for it had become more or less synonymous with being uncivilised, uncultured, backward, even foolish and silly. And when we considered such name calling applied to our people as 'chinboke' we cannot but interpret it as direct and flagrant insult, and the fact that we have some 'rotten friends' is no consolation.<sup>11</sup>

The consciousness of ethnic identity becomes greater and greater among the people especially after the second world war. In 1946 the Zo people in Lushai - hills who were known as Lushais formed the Mizo commoner Union (later Mizo Union) which resulted in the change of their name from Lushai to Mizo (it means Zo people) legitimised in 1954. The awareness of their true generic name for their ethnic identity became increasingly popular and various political organisations, mission organisations, indigenous journals, periodicals and bulletins are named after the generic name of Zo such as: Zomi National Congress, Zomi Democratic Front, United Zomi Organisation, All Zomi Students Association, Zomi Baptist

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*Chin Hills*, (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1891), 20; Carey, B. S. & H. N. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, our dealings with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of the Country* (1932), (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd., on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl (India), 1976), quoted by Go, 1996, 13; G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. III, Part III, (Calcutta: (reprint), 1967), 1; J.H. Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (194), Asiatic Society, (Aizawl, (India): Tribal Research Institute (reprint), 1982), 569; J.H. Cope, *A Chin Primer in the Sizang Dialect*, (Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press, 1914), lesson nos. 16, 21, 22; Sipra Sen, *Tribes of Mizoram: Description, Ethnology and Bibliography*, (New Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1992), 4; see also Go, 1996, 11-15.

Convention, Zomi Bible School (which was renamed as Zomi Baptist Theological Seminary, and today known as Zomi Theological College), Zomi Siamsin Magazine, Zomi Christian Literature Society, Zo Aw, Zoheisa Magazine, Zo Reunification Organization (ZORO), Zomi Baptist Convention of Myanmar, Zomi Literature Uplift Society (ZOLUS), Zomi Khristian Aw (ZOMKA), Zo Lawkta, Zomi Music Uplift Society (ZOMUS), Zodamtui, Zomi Today, Zokhankhual, etc. emerged in recent days.

The latest and a historically significant affirmation of the term Zo was made in 1988, which was called the first world Zo convention, held at the Indo-Burma border town of Champhai in Mizoram (India) from 19 to 21 May, 1988. It was well attended by representatives of all Zo-sub-ethnic groups. It issued a declaration on the question of ethnic identity as follows:

We, the people of Zo ethnic group, inhabitants of the highlands in the Chin Hills and Arakans of Burma, the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, the Mizoram state and adjoining hill areas of India are descendants of one ancestor. Our language, our culture, and tradition, and no less our social and customary practices are clear evidences of the ethnological facts. Further, our historical records, and footprints both written and unwritten in the sands of time testify to the truth of our common ancestry.<sup>12</sup>

I believe that our thesis for the use of Zo in place of the already known 'Chin' is convincing. Although everyone does not agree yet, to the best of my observation, the majority people along with anthropologists and historians prefer to substitute the term Zo to 'Chin' as the generic name of ethnic identity. Thus, hereafter we will use 'Zo' in this thesis to refer and address the people formerly known as Chin.

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<sup>11</sup> S. T. Hau Go, 'Some random thoughts about our people, our language, and our culture,' in *Chin Magazine*, (Rangoon: Rangoon Universities, 1971-1972, (English section), 1972, 9.

### 7.2.3 The Sociological Structure of the Zo people

The insufficiency of written history makes us unable to describe the sociological structure of the Zo people in the early periods of settlement in Burma. However, it is presumed that they migrated from central Asia into Burma through the valleys of Melekha, Chindwin, Irrawaddy and settled in the plain areas first. As common in human history, they were involved in wars, and sometimes looking for more pasture land, they crossed the rugged hills of western Burma and lived in the present Chin state of Burma, Mizoram and other northeastern states of India and the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. In the process of migration they moved from one place to another in groups. When they settled in a local place they formed their local authority for protection from inter-tribal wars headed by each headman in their own localities.

It is most probable to assume that all Zo people spoke one language in their earliest stage. As the time passed by, generations after generations, each different local community formed their own dialects. When they were living in their own community without having proper channels for communication either by roads or any sort of media they became spontaneously different groups, enmity occurred between and among themselves. Each local community had their own chief and there were numerous inter-tribal wars until the British came and annexed the whole country of Zoland in 1889.

The occupation and annexation of Zo inhabited country by the British was a turning point for the Zo people. This brought an end to their migration, education

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<sup>12</sup> *Champhai Convention, (First World Zomi Convention)*, organized by Zo Reunification Organisation, (Aizawl, 1988), 14, see also Go, 1996, 17-18.

was introduced, roads were constructed and inter-tribal wars came to an end. The Zo people began to be civilised and turned to a new era in their history, but there was no attempt to abolish the existence of the local social and linguistic groups. Instead, the British administrators reempowered the local chiefs and they became more powerful in their own areas. This local-chief authority was formed on the basis of the spoken dialects. Thus the formation of dialect-groups became a tool for ethnic division.

In 1899, exactly one decade after the British Annexation, the first Christian missionaries arrived in the Zoland, i.e. the present Chin State of Burma. The missionaries did numerous good deeds and the Gospel rapidly transformed the lives of the Zo people within a century. By contrast with the pre-British and pre-Christian day, there was a sudden change in the social life of the Zo people, and they had advanced in many social areas as the British administrators laid the foundation of a new social awareness. The missionaries comparatively developed much of the people's social life along with their hard labour in preaching the Gospel. However, they (the missionaries) too did not make any effort to abolish the local dialects, rather they invented scripts for each dialect spoken by the people locally and translated portions of the Bible into local dialects which strengthens locality in Zomi society.

Since early 1950s Zomi indigenous Christian leaders began to take up the work of Christian mission gradually. In 1966 the Revolutionary Council of Burma expelled all foreigners, including foreign missionaries from Burma. Consequently the indigenous Christians had to take up the entirety of missionary work and Bible translations were being carried out by Zomi Christian leaders under the support and

supervision of the British and Foreign Bible Society, later the United Bible Societies; yet no attempt has been made to abolish the force of dialectical groups.<sup>13</sup>

#### 7.2.4 Analysis

We have seen the cause and effect of issues related to divergence of dialects among the Zo people. In the earliest period, we suspect that migration waves took place according to clan and family feuds, and groups were formed and settled in a local place. In different local places wherever they settled, their spoken dialects were developed with variations as language is fluid, their dialects gradually grow more different as time passed-by. After many centuries their own spoken dialects became more and more established and prominent. Finally, and unfortunately, the Zo people did not understand each others' dialects. This lack of ability to communicate with each other meant that spoken dialects became the boundary markers for ethnic groups among the Zo people. Amongst the Zo people, the differences in spoken dialect assimilates one to a dialectical ethnic group and naturally excludes the other. Spoken language-dialect is one of the most powerful tools for the Zo people's sociological structure from an ethnic point of view.

Historically, the Zo people had scattered to the plains and to the hills, or in the valleys, holding certain geographical areas but there had never been a *united kingdom of the Zo people*. The sociological structure of the Zo people is therefore, an unstable, locally based structure. The ethnic group is founded on a dialect base

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<sup>13</sup> K.Z. Go argues for attempting to create a common version for all the Zo people in his work, 1996, cited above, which I will argue against below for a smaller scope of Zomi ethnic group on the basis of a biblical teaching from the life and rules of the Matthean community and my empirical research in the field of work.

and spoken dialect becomes the ethnic boundary marginline in the sociological structure of the Zo people.

If we investigate the sociological structure of the Zo people from an ethnic perspective, the ethnic groupism among the Zo people is in fact a dialectical ethnicity. We have explained that, prior to written history, the Zo people formed their own local communities with chiefs and headmen of each community and they fought one another. There were no more inter-tribal conflicts after the British rule and the Christian era, but the spoken dialects formed in that historic period still cause tensions between dialectical ethnic groups of the Zo people until today. The Zomi Baptist Convention was founded in 1953 for inclusion of Baptists from all dialectical ethnic groups of Zo people in Burma (except the Asho-Chins in the plain and the Zomis in Arakan state) but unspoken tension and enmity is experienced in almost every step of the work and its organisational administration.<sup>14</sup> This problem finally caused the split of the Zomi Baptist Convention (ZBC) and the Zomi Baptist Convention of Myanmar (ZBCM) in April 1995.

If we look back to our sketchy description of the Zo people's sociological structure, firstly the British administration did not make any effort to abolish this dialectical ethnicity even though they put an end to the inter-tribal wars. Secondly,

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<sup>14</sup> The author himself was on the Executive Committee of the Zomi Baptist Convention from 1990 to 1995, and also became the Director of Mission for the Convention from 1992-1995 and has his own personal involvement and experience in operating the work of the Convention as an officer. Rev. Kam Khaw Thang, one of the prominent leaders of the ZBC from the time it was founded until today, who has served as the president or the vice-president of the Convention for 11 terms, (altogether over thirty years because election term is three years according to the constitution and bye-laws of the organization), wrote an essay in 1987 and strongly suggested that to form separate Conventions according to dialectical ethnic groups was preferable, or in terms of geographical range if wished; otherwise the ZBC may face overload problems which even the Baptist World Alliance or the World Council of Churches might not be able to solve. These problems, in other words, may lead to more serious conflicts and dangerous results.

the missionaries too did not pay serious attention to ethnic issues in the Christian era. Thirdly, even the contemporary indigenous Zomi Christian leaders have not seriously sought solutions for ethnic issues, instead, Bibles have been and are being translated into each dialect. The present consultant for Bible translation in south-east Asia under the United Bible Societies himself is a Zomi, and also all the present translators of the Bible in Zomi dialects are Zomi, but there is so far no suggestion of any attempt to have a common version of the Bible which, if produced, could lead to a common language for all the dialectical ethnic groups of the Zo people according to Go's hypothesis.<sup>15</sup>

#### **7.2.5 Critique of Go's thesis**

Khup Za Go argues that there is no intention to form a common Zomi version of the Bible either by the Bible Societies or the Zomi Christian leaders. Each dialect is encouraged to translate the Bible and consequently there are now over twenty versions of the Bible in different Zo dialects. They claim to be one people of Zo but never attempt to create a common version of the Bible in a single language.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Go, 1996, the entire argument and central theme of Go's hypothesis is to attempt a common Zo Bible which may lead to creating a common language for all the Zo people.

<sup>16</sup> Go has argued this well in his thesis for the degree of master in theology submitted to Serampore College, India, published by the Chin Baptist Literature Board, 1996. It is a good intention to form a common version of the Bible in principle for Christian unity and possibly national unity. But the questions we raise in the following are seriously critical. Moreover we will argue very soon from the light of the Matthean Community's Life-Setting that common language and common Gospel did not make the two ethnic groups cohesive in the life of the Matthean community. I agree with Go partially. In my opinion, to create a common version of the Bible for all the dialects of Zo people (twenty dialects) which Go listed in the Appendix 'C' of his work cited is unrealistic; but it is essential to attempt a common version for the ethnic groups who are more or less the same in their spoken dialects and understand each other, yet translate the Bible into their own dialects. In this case I can certainly refer and would like to apply to a particular group of the Zo people - the Ciimnuai family group, who claim to have been together at the place called Ciimnuai where they likely formed and developed most of their cultures and customs which still exist today. They have the same culture and they understand each other's dialect but they translated the Bible into their own dialects; and these translations are

Viewing Go's thesis theoretically there seems to be possibility that if the Zo people were able to attempt a common Zo version of the Bible that could have the result of defining a common language. It could then be expected that the existence of a common language might strengthen unity among them. Additionally, today most of the Zo people are Christians and Christianity has great impact and influence upon the life and culture of the people. For the Zo people, the creation of this common language is not entirely new or strange; but it is rather a reversion to their early stage of their history when they most probably spoke one language at the time of their settlement in Burma. In other words, going back to the time of having a single language could mean going forward for the Zo people.

But this would mean the sacrifice of some dialects and the adoption of others. Who would be willing to lose their mother-tongue and adopt a borrowed dialect to be his/her tongue? It is a critical question. Or perhaps another possible way to solve the problem is to invent an entirely new Zomi language for common use in the whole of Zo country for all its inhabitants. If an entirely new language for the common use of the Zo people were created, there is a further question: Would that

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known as: Tedim Bible, Vaiphei Bible, Kuki/Thado Bible, Paite Bible, Gangte Bible, Simte Bible, Zou Bible, and Sizang Bible. (See Go, 1996, Appendix 'C'). It is unrealistic, in my opinion, that all the Zo dialectical groups such as: Lusei, Mara, Haka, Hmar, Asho, Falam, Khumi, Biata, Zotung, Kom Rem, Hallam (Chorei), Bawm, Darlong and many more would come together and form a common Bible to eventually produce a common language. But the possibility of the Ciimnuai family group of the Zo people (listed above) is visible. Even if all the Zomi people could create a common Bible in form, the written language would be quite different from all other dialects; and even if a new language is invented collectively from all the Zo dialects it will be entirely new to everyone and the difficulty of learning that new language may lead to abandoning the new created version of the Zo common Bible. But if the Ciimnuai family group, as an example, who are one linguistic and cultural group, could form a common Bible; once it is produced everyone will easily learn and understand and eventually use because the mother-tongues of these sub-groups are almost the same. If this is attempted successfully, it will lead them to closer understanding of each other and consequently bring Christian unity towards actuality. But to create a Zo common Bible for all dialectical groups is unrealistic and even if it were done, I doubt very much that the Zo people will read it in preference to the Bible in their mother-tongue.



new language provide a substitute for the mother-tongues of all the existing dialectical groups of the Zo people? If the mother-tongues are still to exist locally, then the new created common language would not abolish the dialectical ethnic spirit of division and tension. It would make communication easier but ethnic boundaries will not be abolished and more or less the same degree of ethnic tension and conflict may still occur. Go's thesis, with its purpose of the unity of all the Zo people, is good in principle but will not solve the problem of ethnic groupism. It could be argued, then, that the Burmans' imposing Burmese (the language of the Burmans majority people) as a common language, is precisely related to this point of unity and nationhood. The Burman rulers impose their language for unity and nationhood but in reality it results in a more tension-filled reaction of the minority ethnic groups from all over the country.

#### **7.2.6 The Application of the Matthean Community Life-Setting to the Zomi People**

More importantly, one has to learn from the life of the Matthean community as history makes people wise. Greek was the common language of the Matthean community and they produced the Gospel in Greek as their common Scripture to be read in the church exactly like the vision of Khup Za Go for the Zo people. Despite having a common language and a common Gospel the Matthean community underwent certain conflicts, racial discrimination, and split into two groups which were never reconciled if our thesis is correct. To be sure, in the life of the Matthean community having a common language and a common Gospel did not make for

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group cohesion. Although all the members of Matthew's church were able to communicate in one common language (Greek) the cultural boundary between Jews and Gentiles was so crucial so that it was difficult to keep any unity and harmony between the two ethnic groupings. It was culture which tied together all the Jews by birth and at the same time it was the Jewish culture which caused group conflicts with the Gentile converts within the church at Antioch before and after the Matthean leadership.<sup>17</sup> Culture was a very powerful tool in the life of the Matthean community which we have argued in preceding chapters.

If a common Gospel and a common language did not serve group cohesion in the life of the Matthean community we should take it as a biblical teaching from the life of the early church and an other alternative must be sought for the Zomi people today; because despite the claim of all the Zo people to be one people and from one ancestor, there are certain great differences in culture, custom, and behaviour among the Zo people which shapely distinguish the Zo ethnic groups one from another. For example, the Ciimnuai family of the Zo ethnic group and the Mizo ethnic group are as distinct in their language and culture. Also the Asho Chin Zomi ethnic group and the Paite Zomi ethnic group are quite different in culture and language, the Asho Chin Zomis are much closer to the Burmans in language and culture than their own people of the Paite Zomis. Therefore, one has to consider the power of culture and language or dialect seriously before reaching a conclusion. For the Zomi people today, it seems best that devolution should be given to each dialectical ethnic group

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<sup>17</sup> The incident at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-18) was on the issue of table fellowship between the circumcised and the uncircumcised; its root cause is undoubtedly the cultural distance between Jews and Gentiles. For instance, the Jews did not want to share table fellowship with the uncircumcised (Gentiles) at the time of Peter and Paul (Gal. 2:8-11) which seems to be continued by the members of Matthew's

which the Zomi Baptist Convention of Myanmar (ZBCM) took as a step, and understood to be the only way for keeping the unity of the entire Zo people, and for a new and healthy partnership in the future without tension.<sup>18</sup> 'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it' (Prov. 15:17) is the word of the wise king Solomon, for me and the ZBCM, '*Better is separation but still love than togetherness with hatred.*' Therefore, the ZBCM separated from the ZBC (Zomi Baptist Convention) and took her stand that devolution is the best solution for the present situation in order to prevent the break-up of the entire Zomi unity as Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom said;

Labour's decision to give devolution to Scotland and Wales had prevented the break-up of the United Kingdom.... It had stopped any move towards Scottish independence. If we had said to the people in Scotland, you have no choice. It is status quo-everything must go through Westminster - or it is separation, in my view in the end you would have had a huge move towards separation. Devolution is a new partnership within the United Kingdom. Whatever the criticisms, it is the best way to preserve the United Kingdom.<sup>19</sup>

In drawing boundaries for the devolution for the Zomi people, culture and spoken dialect should be the most important two features because we have seen the difficulties created by cultural perspectives in the life of Matthew's community which caused them to split. Spoken dialect is one of the clearest identity markers for the dialectical ethnic groups of the Zo people that (dialects) obviously and sharply distinguish a person's ethnic group identity in Zomi society; and the different

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church as we have argued; moreover, even the Matthean Jesus did not touch any of the Gentile sick people whom he healed, see this thesis, 206-209, particularly see 208.

<sup>18</sup> I was one of those responsible for that decision to take up devolution by the present Zomi Baptist Convention of Myanmar in 1995 as the only solution to that situation of tension and conflict within the Zomi Baptist Convention. I write it here as one primary source and responsible person for this cause. I also would like to clearly state that the ZBCM's aim was to include all the Ciimnuai family of the Zo dialectical groups from the very beginning of its formation unchangingly.

<sup>19</sup> THE TIMES, Monday, May 8, 2000., 1, col. 2.

dialectical ethnic groups have distinctive cultures too. They (the Zomis) should journey back to the point where their present culture and custom were formulated and their language established. It seems that the Zomis in the northern Chin state today formed most of their present culture and customs in their settlements in about the 15<sup>th</sup> century CE, for example, at Ciimnuai for one group and Lailun for another group and so on. During the time of this settlement their spoken dialects also became well established and prominent. In actual fact, if we view this from a linguistic point of view, the Lailun group of Zomis has the sound of 'R' in their spoken language whereas the Ciimnuai group does not have it at all. These two groups are therefore, easily identifiable by their dialects. As an example, the Zomis in the northern Chin state most likely developed their custom and culture at Ciimnuai and Lailun, which is reflected in their social life so that all the Ciimnuai group of Zomis have the same culture and customs and while the Lailun group of Zomis also share identical customs. Moreover, all the Ciimnuai group of Zomis speak one dialect with a slight difference in accent and they all can communicate without interpretation. In our critique of the Matthean Life-Setting and its community rules we concluded that culture was the norm that raised the greatest obstacles to integration between different ethnic groups (Jews and Gentiles) and we suggested that Christian organizations and missions should be structured according to ethnic groups. While looking for Christian organizations and mission works for the Zo people, culture and language should be the most important features in defining boundaries of ethnic groups. Therefore, the position of the ZBCM, which was founded in 1995, uses language and culture as the two most significant tools to draw its boundary and aims to embrace all the Ciimnuai

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family group of Zomis who share the same culture, speak one dialect, and confess the same faith in Jesus Christ for the drive of Christian mission; this is indeed exactly in accordance with the principles we learned and derived from our discussion of the failure of the Matthean leadership. Now in reality all the members of ZBCM are from the same cultural background, under the same customary codes, and speak one dialect by which they communicate in writing and speech.

In terms of anthropological science the forming of the Zomi Baptist Convention of Myanmar (ZBCM) is an instrumentality ethnic movement, which has a definite goal and purpose but the ethnic group boundary is defined by the primordiality factors i.e. culture and language.<sup>20</sup> I am convinced that having the same culture will act as the linchpin which makes the group cohesive for the Zomis, and which will certainly strengthen unity and allow people to work together; and communicating in one language within the community will be a powerful tool for Christian service. When the two facets are locked together there can be greater performance for the benefit of its constituent members, and the Gospel will be spread more rapidly.<sup>21</sup>

However, a Christian Union or a Zomi National Council of Churches in ecumenical terms, is needed in my point of view. But in terms of Christian organizational structure there should be two layers: the National Christian Council should be a very loose organization for the sake of ecumenical fellowship, and the lower layer Christian organizations should be formed on the basis of cultural and

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<sup>20</sup> See this thesis, 14 for the definition of 'instrumentality' and 'primordiality' in anthropology.

<sup>21</sup> The remaining members of the ZBC (Zomi Baptist Convention) speak a number of different dialects using one dominant majority's dialect or borrowing Burmese for their communication.

language-dialectical groups (like the ZBCM) for solidarity and executing active Christian service for better performances and greater results than centralizing every mission activity in the higher layer organization. Moreover, to form a Zomi ethnic federal state for all the Zo people in political terms is also essential. These responsibilities fall upon all the people of Zo in all regions as soon as the importance is realized. This is a national agenda for Zomi Christian leaders, educated youngsters, politicians and the people as a whole, to struggle for a united Union which would embrace all the Zomis in Burma.<sup>22</sup>

### **7.3 Application to Ethnic Issues in Christian Mission in Burma**

The present Christian population in Burma is composed of mainly ethnic minorities, so in almost all Christian organizations at national level there is inevitably a composition of different ethnic groups. Many of the ethnic groups have sub-ethnic groups within themselves. These factors show the possibility of ethnic tensions within the spectrum of Christian mission and administration in different denominations at different levels of organizational structure; and also, in interdenominational organizations for both ecumenical and evangelical wings.

Once we have examined the sociological structure of the Zomi people in relation to the split of the Zomi Baptist Convention (ZBC) and the formation of the Zomi Baptist Convention of Myanmar (ZBCM) in 1995 from an ethnic perspective,

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<sup>22</sup> Some Zomi politicians have started a political movement which they called "ZORO" (Zo Re-unification Organization) to reunite all the Zo people in three countries, Burma, India, and Bangladesh; but this may end up in war on a major scale. Since the application of this research for this particular thesis and the thesis topic itself is confined to 'ethnic issues in Burma' I leave it for a further political science research.

and applied, as an analytical tool, the results of our study of the Matthean community, it will be found that ethnic issues can be determinative factors in Christian mission. The separation which took place among the Zomi people in recent years is neither the best nor the preferred option, but it is still better than further ethnic conflicts. It is not the initial advice from the viewpoint of the author to other ethnic groups who may be in similar situation, but it is advisable to take the step of devolution when the alternates are either permanent separation with enmity or a form of devolution which permits some sharing in our ecumenical spirit; as we have seen in the permanent separation of the Matthean community in later generations. We should take this as a biblically implicit teaching from the life of the Matthean community which was a mixture of two ethnic groups which later suffered a painful schism.

However, it is essential to make a critical study of the ethnic group's anthropology and sociological structure from an ethnic viewpoint before applying a biblical analysis because the prime motivating factors of each ethnic group may be different. For instance, the Jewish cultural practice of separation at meals was of paramount importance for Matthew's community, whereas the interlocking factors of culture, language, and blood ties are the best criteria to draw organizational boundaries for the Zomi people as we have argued in the preceding section. Different ethnic groups may have different ethnic identity markers which fulfil this role. One has to study those facts and factors and then decide which markers are prominent and fitting to judge the group's boundaries. From my viewpoint, the preferred solution to ethnic issues is devolution; this is certainly better than painful schism with enmity, but if devolution is not acceptable it is advisable that the responsible leaders listen to the voice of the minority with a sensitive ear and take care to deal equally with all

groups, so that everyone plays a part in the community and in its service, and particular traditions may be incorporated into the activities of the whole group. We will, then, know no more ethnic conflicts in our societies.

#### 7.4 Application to Ethnic Issues in Political Affairs in Burma

At the introduction of this thesis, it was argued that the political crisis of Burma since independence from British colonization in 1948 and the major cause of the decline of national economy was found in ethnic problems.<sup>23</sup> In our introduction we also have given evidence that almost each ethnic group has resorted to armed conflict. The central government of Burma blames the ethnic leaders for fighting against the central government and interprets their stance as rebellion. In reaction to the insurgency movements of ethnic groups, the Burmese troops fire on both the armed and unarmed ethnic people, particularly in regions where the insurgents occupy the land either in full or partial control. The ethnic leaders refer to *the Panglong Agreement*<sup>24</sup> and take their stand that the central government has betrayed the ethnic minorities.

The Panglong Agreement Clause Five guaranteed: 'Full autonomy in internal administration for the Frontier Areas is accepted in principle'; and Aung San, the hero of Burma's independence movement and the organizer of the Panglong Agreement assured the ethnic minority leaders: '*If Burma receives one Kyat, you*

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<sup>23</sup> See this thesis, 1-5.

<sup>24</sup> The Panglong Agreement is the national agreement made by all representatives of both majority and minority ethnic groups in the whole of Burma signed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1947 at Panglong, Shan state, which declared certain principles for the future of Burma; 23 representatives from minority ethnic groups, Shan state, Kachin hills, and Chin hills signalled their willingness to cooperate with the interim Burmese government, Smith, 1999, 78.



*will also get one Kyat.*<sup>25</sup> On the eve of the conference Zomi (Chin), Kachin, and Shan leaders met and agreed to make a number of united demands including 'the same political rights and privileges as the Burmans, the continued right of political autonomy and the right of secession from the proposed federation.'<sup>26</sup> This, the Second Panglong Agreement, was signed after an intense week of bargaining and discussion between the ethnic leaders and the Burman leaders, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1947 with the agreement to form a Union of Burma. It was soon followed by the Constituent Assembly and the Constitution was adopted on the 24 September 1947; its aims of federalism and power divided between Burma Proper and the ethnic states.<sup>27</sup> In reality almost every action opposes that agreement. Instead of dividing power between Burmans<sup>28</sup> majority and the ethnic minority groups everything is under the control of the central government, especially from 1962 when Ne Win seized power. Instead of allowing ethnic minority groups to form federal states the present military regime has been attempting to de-stabilise local cultures by a series of means such as: abolishing formal learning of vernacular languages and scripts in primary schools in their own ethnic lands and regions respectively, banning inter-marriage of ethnic girls and Burman soldiers, promoting Buddhism amongst ethnic Christians and sometimes forcing ethnic Christians to convert to Buddhism under threats, and encouraging Burman elements of culture and custom as against local elements. Instead of granting equal rights and opportunities to ethnic minorities, they

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<sup>25</sup> Kyat is the currency of Burma, like the Sterling Pound of Britain and the Dollar of the U.S.A.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, 1999, 78-9.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, 1999, 79.

<sup>28</sup> Burmans is used in this thesis to denote the dominant majority ethnic or racial group of people, and Burmese to denote all inhabitants or citizens of Burma. But when we speak of Burmese in terms of language, it means the language of the Burmans in this thesis.

are excluded from all real participation. In short, *the Panglong Agreement, the 1947 Constitution, and the promises* are far from having been implemented.

If we look at the ethnic issues and the current political crisis of Burma from an ethnic point of view, we find that the majority group, the Burmans, have fiercely suppressed the minorities. This intolerant suppression resulted in unrest, armed conflict, and, ultimately, national disaster. This disaster fell upon the less protected minorities in the first instance but the majority also suffered. The only solution, in the opinion of the author, is to gather together all ethnic leaders representing even the smallest group in number, and negotiate again with the majority dominant Burmans government for equal rights and equal privileges in all areas of human rights. In return, the majority people and responsible rulers of the nation must pay attention to the voice of the minorities and faithfully carry out any agreement. Otherwise, there is even a danger of falling back into the status of a stronger nation's colony.

In this context the failure of Matthew's community leadership was that they did not have a sufficient room for the minority nor concern for the comfort of the Gentile minority group; Matthew's perspective was centred upon Israel, and presumed that becoming Israel was the only way to join to become a member of the eschatological people of God. In that case, Matthew's failure is understandable from a late first century perspective, but the failure of the Burmans leadership in Burma is, unlike Matthew's, intentional negligence of minority ethnic rights and suppression of all privileges. Until Burma accepts responsibility for this serious ill-treatment meted out to the ethnic minorities there will never be peace and prosperity; instead, the divisions and economic bankruptcy will increase, as the pain of ill-treatment is realized more and more by the minorities. Thus one should learn from the life of the Matthean

community's failure and success as a biblical community, shaping and shaped by its own Gospel and apply equal rights to all existing ethnic groups, granting them political autonomy according to their size and ability to manage their own affairs. There should be federal ethnic states, federal divisions, federal union territories, and federal districts in terms of political administration and sharing the central power equally. We may then expect peace in the whole land because Burma's armed conflicts within the last fifty years are very seldom international but with internal ethnic groups; only when the conflicts and insurgency movements calm down, will there be *shalom* and prosperity for the well being of every citizen of Burma.

As Solomon, the wise man of God, says, 'You know that David my father could not build a house for the name of the Lord his God because of the warfare (the wars) with his enemies surrounded him, until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet' (1Kings 5:3), Burma has been unable to develop its economy or to build itself as a developed nation because of its internal wars. Solomon was able to build a house for the name of the Lord his God when the Lord had given him rest on every side (1Kings 5:4a), so too Burma should deal with all its ethnic issues and calm down all the armed conflicts on every side, then it will be able to develop the nation for the best welfare of every inhabitant.

Finally, it is the prayerful appeal of the author that, not only leaders of Burma but also leaders of our global world today in religious and political spectrums should pay serious attention to ethnic conflicts for healing our wounded world as most of our

armed conflicts since the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century are between ethnic or religious groups.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See this thesis, 5.

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